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Curtis Yorke



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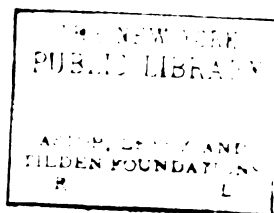
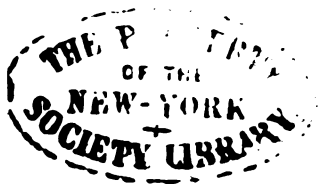
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THE OTHER SARA

BY

~~CURTIS YORKE~~

pseud. of

Author of "The World and Delia," "The Girl and the Man,"
"Only Betty," "Mollie Deverill," etc.

Mrs. S. R. Lee

*"About the river of human life there is a wintry wind though
a heavenly sunshine."* — JOHN RUSKIN



LONDON: JOHN LONG
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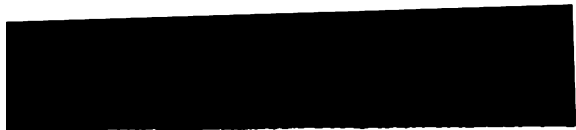
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THE OTHER SARA



The Other Sara

Chapter I

"BUT what is it all about?" said Terence Agnew, who had just dropped in to tea.

He was a well-set-up, cheerful-looking young man of twenty-one, or thereabouts, and gave the impression of being at peace with all mankind.

"My dear boy, I thought you knew," replied Mrs. Hamersley in a fretful voice. "We are threatened with an absolutely impossible addition to our household. Sallie, explain it to him. I have thought of it and talked of it until I feel physically sick."

"It really is rather appalling," said Sallie, trying not to laugh—"at least, from mother's point of view it is. Of course, in a way, it's funny, too."

The speaker was a tall, slim girl, whose principal charms were a quantity of dark-red hair and a singularly lovable expression.

"You see, it's like this," she went on. "We've got to have an elderly half-cousin or something quartered upon us until she dies or marries; and she's old enough to be unlikely to marry, and not old enough to be likely to die."

"You don't mean that your great-uncle Westlake's heiress has turned up at last?" exclaimed Terence.

"Yes, I do. But that's not the worst," she said,

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with a comical twist of her red young mouth. "She — well, she's a very common kind of person — a pronounced cockney, indeed; and she keeps some kind of shop — an old-clothes and furniture-shop, I think — in Limehouse."

"Angels and ministers of grace defend us!" ejaculated Terence, sitting down suddenly.

"You know," went on Sallie, with a twinkling glance at her stepmother's woebegone face, "that old Westlake's solicitors have been scouring the universe for this person for years; and there seems to be no doubt that she is the missing heiress, though at first we hoped she wasn't. Her name is Sara Grub — Sara spelt without the 'h,' just like mine — but her maiden-name was Westlake — she is a widow, by the way — and she was, or is, the only child of Simon Westlake, who was dad's cousin and great-uncle Westlake's only child —"

"Well, you do reel it off," said Terence. "My head is like a merry-go-round. Why on earth have they been so long in tracing her if her identity is so well established?"

"Because she was supposed to be dead," snapped Mrs. Hamersley; "and I'm sure I wish she were. It is bad enough to have an impossible cousin-in-law, or whatever she is, sprung upon us from the slums; but to have her in the house, under our very noses, for ever —"

"Yes; it certainly beats the band," observed Terence thoughtfully. "But why must she be in the house? Is that necessary?"

"Yes," answered Sallie, making a face. "The will distinctly states that if she is at the time of her being



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found either an unprotected spinster or a widow she is to live with her nearest relatives, and pay them seven hundred a year, provided she is treated as one of the family; and it appears that we are her only relatives. Of course, dad's cousin Simon was about twice as old as dad. And this Mrs. Grub must be quite elderly."

"But if you don't want her in the house, why have her?" said Terence bluntly. "Just chuck the idea of the seven hundred, and there you are."

Mrs. Hamersley laughed disagreeably.

"That is just the point. I can't afford to chuck it. I'm at my wits' end for money, and what with the depreciation of the Calton Brewery shares, and other things, my income will be only half what it was. Of course, if your poor uncle had taken my advice —"

"Now, mother, please don't bring up dear old dad's supposed delinquencies again," said Sallie, her voice not quite steady.

"Perhaps the other Sara may turn out to be a very jolly old sort, after all," put in Terence. "You never can tell. By the way, what's the size of her fortune?"

"Oh, somewhere about ten thousand a year, more or less," murmured his aunt. "And," she added discontentedly, "the will expressly mentions that when she dies the money is all to go to some charity."

"Well, well, speak her fair, and perhaps she may make the allowance run to a thousand instead of seven hundred. I rather think I shall suggest myself as her private secretary."

"It's all very well to joke about it, Terence," replied Mrs. Hamersley, stamping three letters with an air of

green couch. "No, A floor is not good enough for you to sit on. You must leave the room."

"But," demurred Terence, looking at her, "don't see how she can be so awful if she is our relative or how she can be our relative if she is our cause, hang it all! good old Uncle Jimie was as they make them, as far as general all-aroundment goes —"

"Ah, yes," said Sallie; "dear old dad was of course; but his cousin, great-uncle Wess was not all right. He was always, it appeared, a ne'er-do-well, and married very much better than he, when he ran away to California and died. And that was the result."

"Your language is mixed, my child," said she in a tone of patronizing affection. "But I forgive you. Meaning. Well, we're all in rather a hat at present. Let us not permit circumstances to kick us down. Each misfortune and the other Sara in the end the 'eye of the *vox populi*' to the wind. Here a little girl of nine or so, who had been the firelight observer."



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She's a nice old thing, I think, and awfully like Gertie Saltyre's nurse. I like her."

"Be silent, Anne!" said Mrs. Hamersley. "You are far too ready to put in your word when your elders are speaking."

Anne turned her back to the room, and put out her tongue as far as it would go. It was rude, of course; but it was a relief to her, and no one was the wiser.

The door opened, and a servant announced:

"Mr. Rollestone."

"Are you still bemoaning the coming advent of the long-lost heiress?" said the new-comer in a pleasant voice, as he advanced into the room. "There is a cloud of gloom and oppression in the air that is distinctly shivery."

He kissed Mrs. Hamersley and Sallie, shook hands with Terence, and allowed himself to be embraced by little Anne.

"Yes, we're still bewailing ourselves," said Sallie. "The situation won't improve, according to mother."

"Never mind. It will straighten itself out in time," went on Rollestone, as he responded to the boisterous greetings of Winkle. "For my part, I rather liked your namesake, Sallie. She has an honest, if not a classic, face."

"Oh, that's all very well, Evan," interrupted Mrs. Hamersley impatiently; "but what does it matter whether her face is classic or not? It is easy for you to be philosophical. You haven't got to live with her."

"No; that is very true," assented Evan. "Nevertheless, I maintain that she seemed a decent-looking

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little woman enough, though her accent is certainly not that of Oxford."

"Oh, she is dreadful!" was the sharp answer. "What all our friends will say, I can't imagine."

"Dear, foolish little mother-in-law to be," said Evan, smiling slightly, "what does it matter what people say? I wish she were going to bestow her share and her allowance of seven hundred a year upon Sallie and me when we are married. Don't you, Sallie? We'd take that house we looked at last week; and she should have her own suite of rooms, and we ours."

"Why don't you be quick and make a lot of money and marry Sallie quite soon, and let me come and live with you?" put in Anne. "I heard someone say you were a fool to quarrel with your grandmother, and not make it up before she died, because she would have left you all her money. I don't believe you'll ever be married at all. You've been engaged for such age and I'm sure you must have looked at hundreds at thousands of houses."

"Anne, do be silent!" said Mrs. Hamersley again. "Evan, why do you spoil her so?"

Rollestone laughed, and pulled one of Anne's curls. He was a well-made, quiet-looking man of middle height, with strongly marked features, and kind brown eyes that softened tenderly as they rested on Sallie.

"Why don't you follow my tip and go in for Lincolns?" said Terence. "Give you my word, I make an average three hundred a year at it; so what with that and the gov's allowance, I do myself not badly."

"I don't exactly see myself in that line," said Evan, laughing.

"Pooh! Any port in a storm," returned the other

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"The more rotten lines you write, the more chance you have of getting a prize. You mustn't write anything clever. Follow?"

Then he added, turning to Mrs. Hamersley:

"Suppose I make up to the monied widow, win her affections, and carry her off? Eh? And I'll agree to let you go on drawing the seven hundred for commission on introduction, as they say, or used to say, in the city."

"Oh, don't be silly!" was the listless answer.

"Silly! My good aunt, I'm in deadly earnest. How old is this pearl of price?"

"Only about fifty, or a little over," said Sallie cheerfully.

"Well, well," her cousin answered, with a jaunty movement of his square young shoulders; "just in the budding spring of middle-age. No doubt we should be a devoted and model couple. But perhaps she forfeits her money when she marries. You never can tell."

Little Anne gazed at her tall cousin with wide-open mouth and eyes.

"Terence, you wouldn't really marry her, would you? Why, people would laugh," she exclaimed.

"I shall let them do so, my little angel, and may they grow stout as they laugh! When is she coming, Sallie?" he added.

"On Monday evening," said Sallie. "She suggested making her advent in the morning about eleven; but mother made a point of her not coming until after dark."

"Well, I don't want all the other inhabitants of the square to see her until I have at least got her persuaded

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to wear some decent clothes," put in Mrs. Hamersley wearily.

"If the other inhabitants saw her at all, they would probably only conclude you were having in a new cook," said Sallie, laughing. "Really, mother, how you do worry over what people say, or may say! As if it mattered! For my part, I rather enjoy shocking people. If it were necessary that I should carry an undraped leg of mutton down Bond Street in the height of the season, I should do it."

"But how could it be necessary, Sallie?" exclaimed her stepmother protestingly. "But you are just your poor father over again. He had no sense of the fitness of things — no more than a child. I never shall forget his asking a filthy old crossing-sweeper into the hall, and giving him tea and sandwiches, on one of my fourth Fridays. It was ghastly. I felt ill for a week."

"He wasn't filthy," protested Sallie indignantly. "He had been a private in dad's regiment, and had left his former employment to go out to South Africa, and when he came back with only one arm he couldn't get any work, and had to be a crossing-sweeper; and dear old dad got him a place in Hank's, the saddlers, and he is as happy as a king."

"Go it, Sallie," said Terence, clapping her encouragingly upon the shoulder. "By Jove! I don't envy old Evan when he has to listen to your tirades morning, noon and night. As Mademoiselle used to say, your tongue never sits down."

The above chequered conversation took place one dull February afternoon in a large, untidy, cosy room on the second floor of a house on the north side of Bryanston Square. It was supposed to be the morn-

ing-room; but Sallie and Anne always called it the Glory Hole. On informal occasions the family usually had tea there — though Mrs. Hamersley disapproved of this, in case “anyone of importance should call.”

To Sallie and to Anne, however, no visitor was of more importance, socially, than another. According to Sallie, if people were nice, it wouldn't matter to them what room they had tea in; and if they weren't nice, it didn't matter either, as, if they didn't like it, they need not come again.

But Mrs. Hamersley, whose pedigree was not of a nature to ensure her being indifferent to the criticisms and opinions of those to whom she vaguely alluded as “people,” never ceased to deplore what she called “Sallie's unaccountable ways.” So she invariably apologized for and explained her stepdaughter to such new acquaintances as she considered of any importance, usually adding that such “ways” certainly were unknown in the circle of the Boytons (Mrs. Hamersley had been a Miss Boyton).

She was still a pretty woman, though she was nearer fifty than she cared to remember. But she lacked the distinction of her stepdaughter, and fretfully acknowledged as much. Also, she used up-to-date cosmetics too carelessly to leave any doubt as to their presence, and much resented Sallie's good-humoured remonstrances on the subject.

Her own children, Anne and a boy of nearly eleven, were regarded by her as grievances; for Anne would never be pretty, nor what her mother called aristocratic-looking; and the boy, Alec, was a sturdy, ugly, red-haired child, whose manners left much to be desired.

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At the end of Terence's last speech the door opened without noise, and Alec's head appeared. Then a small, grimy hand followed, beckoning mysteriously to Anne, who noiselessly joined him on the door-mat, and the two disappeared on tiptoe, like stage-conspirators to the nursery, which was at the top of the house.

"Well," said Mrs. Hamersley, when Sallie and Terence had wrangled amiably for five minutes or so "I suppose I must look in at the Warrington's and the Pillby-Clark's. Shall you come, Sallie? I hear there is to be a foreign prince or something at the Warringtons'."

"No, thank you," said Sallie, with a swift grimace "By the way, isn't Professor Mangell coming to dinner to-night?"

"Oh dear me, yes. I must remember to tell cook about his porridge. I forgot last time. Really, why a man of his family connections and abilities should insist upon making his evening meal of porridge and treacle, washed down by tumblers of cold tea, I never could imagine."

"He says it is the only diet that is really brain-stimulating," said Sallie, with her soft, irresistible laugh, that Terence often likened to water bubbling round a stone. "He says it is a popular error that fish aids brain structure; and he thinks that all flesh and fowl inflame and nourish our worst tendencies. Alcohol is liver-destroying; coffee, cocoa, and all aerated waters are lowering; and milk is never free from germs. Vegetables when uncooked are dangerous, and when cooked, useless as nutriment."

"What are his views as to strychnine and prussic acid?" asked Terence, with an amiable grin.

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"He is an old fool!" said Evan shortly.

Evan Rollestone was a young man of moods, and was in the grip of one now. He and Sallie had been engaged, as little Anne had said, "for ages," and sometimes it seemed as though the possibility of marriage receded further and further as the months went on.

Terence, though a feather-brained lad in many ways, had a fair amount of tact. So when he had put his aunt into a hansom, he did not return to the Glory Hole, but went off on affairs of his own.

There was silence between the lovers for a few minutes; Evan standing leaning against the window-frame, staring out at the fast-darkening square; Sallie sitting curled up in a low chair by the hearth-rug, with Winkle on her lap.

Presently Evan came over to the fire, and said abruptly:

"I suppose this rich old vulgarian will want to adopt you, and carry you off to foreign watering-places, and give you a thundering good time generally."

"I shouldn't think so," Sallie answered. "Everyone isn't so anxious to pay for my board and lodging and clothing as you are."

"I don't see that there's much prospect for my doing so in the meantime — if ever," was the short answer.

"Poor dear! and had it got a fit of the blues, then?" murmured Sallie soothingly. "Didn't it want to adopt its Sallie and take care of her always?"

"I'm not exactly in a mood for joking," he answered coldly. "I have thought for some time that it would be much better that — that our engagement should end. There seems no earthly prospect of our marriage, and —"

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"And you are getting tired of me," said Sallie, as she kissed Winkle's glossy head.

"You know very well I am not," he answered in a savage tone.

"Then perhaps you have seen some girl with money, who — My dear boy, *don't* glare at me like that. I feel as if I was in the lions' den at the Zoo. What are you trying to break gently to me? I gather that you want to break off our engagement. But why?"

"I didn't say I wanted to break it off. I said it would be best for you —"

"'Best for you, and best for me,'" hummed Sallie under her breath. "All right, dear; let's break it off. As you say, it's been on a long time, and it's beginning to drag a bit, and I might do better, and so might you, so let us kiss one another farewell."

Again silence reigned in the firelit room for a brief space. Then Evan said in a queer voice:

"You take it very philosophically. I am very sorry I did not offer to release you before."

"Don't mention it, dear," she said kindly. "One can't think of everything. Of course, we can go about together just the same, and we can even look at houses for other engaged people; and I'm sure mother won't mind your coming here as usual. But I'd better give you back your ring, hadn't I? You might want it, you know, for the next girl."

Evan had grown very pale, and his hand, as it rested on the mantelshelf, trembled slightly.

"Thank you," he said bitterly. "I shall not expect to come here as usual, nor to help you to select houses for other people. If our engagement ends, I — I shall very probably go abroad."

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"Shall you, dear?" was the silvery answer. "Well, perhaps it would be best. I daresay the next man I am engaged to might not understand. Men are just a little bit blind, sometimes."

"You contemplate engaging yourself to someone else, then?" he said in a stifled voice.

"I may; but, of course, I should write and tell you all about it."

"Oh, don't trouble to write," he answered icily. "Why should you? Your time will doubtless be fully employed in other ways."

"Well, I won't, then, if you would rather not," she said cheerfully. "As someone says somewhere, the twopenny-halfpenny postage is a great strain on the affections."

He muttered something not quite audible.

Sallie pulled Winkle's ears thoughtfully.

"Then shall we break it off at once?" she asked.

"As you please, of course," he answered, after a pause.

"I think it would be as well to get it over," she said, looking into the heart of the fire with absorbed, serious eyes. "You know the Scots' proverb, 'Better a finger off than aye waggin'.'"

As she spoke she looked at her watch, deposed Winkle, and sprang to her feet.

"Good gracious!" she exclaimed; "I had no idea it was so late. Say good-bye quickly, dear boy. I have a thousand things to do before dinner. Here is your ring. I'll send on your letters and presents some time to-morrow. You can keep mine. So good-bye, if you will have it so. We've had some good old times together, haven't we, after all?"

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Then, as he did not speak, she came quite near to him, and, leaning her head against his arm, said, with a tiny sigh:

"Dear old boy, I shall quite miss you, for a bit. But you'll let me know when you are going abroad, won't you?"

"No, I shall not," he broke out fiercely. "What concern is it of yours when I go, or where? I shall never willingly see or speak to you again. You are an infernally cruel little girl; and if anyone had told me you would treat me as you have done, I simply should not have believed it. However, I'm off. Good-bye."

"Good-bye," she said, taking the hand he held out to her. "Won't you kiss me — for the last time?"

"No," he answered shortly.

"But why?"

He looked down into her eyes, and Sallie's eyes were very nearly beautiful.

"You know very well why," he said, losing colour somewhat. "Let me go, for God's sake, before I make an ass of myself!"

But Sallie had come nearer, and two warm young arms had crept round his neck.

"O goose, goose!" she murmured, between laughter and tears. "Don't you know it takes two to break an engagement, as well as to make one? Is it likely I should give you up, after having you for my own boy all this time? Is it likely I should send back all your dear letters and presents and my darling ring, and let you go abroad? — unless, of course, you no longer cared for little Sallie. It isn't that, dear, is it?"

He took her roughly into his arms and kissed her.

"Sallie," he said under his breath — "my wicked,

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darling little Sallie, what on earth do you suppose I should do without you?"

"You couldn't do without me," she answered, laughing softly. "But you were in a temper, and said what you didn't in the least mean, just for pure badness. So I thought I'd give you a scare."

"You did give me a scare," he said briefly. "But, seriously, Sallie, I do feel an awful sweep when I think of the men you might marry, instead of waiting for a penniless beggar like me."

"Yes; isn't it heartbreaking?" she acquiesced. "Don't talk like a titled lover in a penny novelette. If I choose to wait for you instead of marrying all the other men you speak of — I am not a female Mormon, by the way — you ought to feel proud and thankful, and —"

"I am proud and thankful," he said.

A suppressed giggle from the other end of the hearth-rug made them move apart suddenly.

Alec and Anne were standing in attitudes carefully copied from those of Sallie and Evan — that is to say, Alec's arm was round Anne's waist, and her head was resting upon his shoulder; and each young face was screwed up into an expression that was indescribably ludicrous.

"Really, children —" began Sallie crossly.

But Alec interrupted her.

"You did look two such fools," he chuckled.

"Catch me making such an ass of myself when I grow up. When I'm engaged I'll have no silly kissing and hugging. There's no need of being asses because one's going to be married."

"You'll have to kiss the girl you're going to marry,"

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said Anne, with an air of decision. "Men always do."

"Don't talk rubbish, youngsters!" said Evan knocking the two little heads gently together. "Run and look in the right-hand pocket of my overcoat, and see what you'll find; and you needn't come back to tell me about it. You'll see me to-morrow."

The young people departed, Alec grimacing rudely.

"Then you don't think of going abroad?" said Sallie demurely, when they were alone again.

"Not unless I get the offer of a good job that will bring our marriage within reasonable distance. Suppose I did, would you be willing to come with me Sallie, and leave all your people here, and — and everything?"

"Evan, you do make me cross. Of course I should. If you had to be an inspector of prisons in Siberia, I'd come too; though I don't mind acknowledging that I would rather you had a warmer appointment. Of course, we must wait until you do get some appointment. I should hate to be a drag upon you, and for us both to be too hard up to think of anything but would money matters. But whenever you are ready for me I shall come, even if our home has to be at the other end of the world."

"God bless you, little woman! Lord! what a fool I was to invest all my capital in that wild-cat scheme in Holystal! Why, we should have been married long ago. I must have been mad."

"Not at all," said Sallie consolingly. "Anyone would have done it. I should, like a shot. If it had turned out well, we should have been as rich as — as your grandmother. I never can forgive the spiteful old creature not leaving you her money, as she prom-

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ised. Never mind. Things will turn up. Even if nothing does, we'll go on being engaged until the end of time; for however economical we might be, we couldn't manage on your salary, could we?"

"No, dear, we could not. It would be out of the question."



Chapter II

MR. LIRRIP, the solicitor mentioned in the previous chapter, had taximetred down to Limehouse to have a little talk with Mrs. Grub before finally delivering her into the hands of her newly found relatives. He found her, as he had found her on his previous visit, sitting placidly in a Queen Anne chair at the back of her little shop in War Lane.

It was not easy to define what manner of shop it was, for it was crammed with rickety pieces of furniture, old or middle-aged; pieces of old carpets; stained old prints; cracked china and glass, and various other odds and ends which its owner called "queerios." There was a box of torn and musty books, too, bearing the inscription, "All in this box 6d." As it was the only box of books in the place, the announcement appeared superfluous; but Mrs. Grub said it "looked literary."

Sara Grub was a short, stout woman, with a round, healthy face, shrewd hazel eyes, and smooth black hair streaked with grey, surmounted by a shabby black bonnet trimmed with bows of heliotrope ribbon. No one had ever seen her without this bonnet. Indeed, in the neighbourhood it was popularly supposed that she slept in it. She also wore a green cashmere gown, rather stained at the seams, and a black beaded cape thrown carelessly across her shoulders.

"Good arternoon, sir," she said cheerily, as Mr.

Lirrip made his way through a labyrinth of miscellaneous articles marked for sale in plain figures.

"Good afternoon, Mrs. Grub," responded her visitor, seating himself upon a dusty oak settle. "I just ran down to see if I could do anything for you — that is to say, I thought you might like me to give you some hints as to — well, of course, you may find yourself rather at sea a bit at first. They do things differently at the other end of the town, you know."

"I dare say I'll get used to them in time," said Mrs. Grub placidly — "just the same as they'll 'ave to get used to me. I didn't think too 'ighly of the manners of the lidy of the 'ouse — Mrs. 'Ammerer, or whatever 'er nime is. Straight, she gave me the 'ump. But I kind of took to the red-haired girl. Lord! ain't it queer to think we're 'alf-cousins? And I've nothing against that young chap that's sweet on her — Rollestone they called 'im. He's a gentleman, every 'alf-inch of him, and bein' descended from quality, I knows 'em when I sees 'em. How do you do, Mrs. Bassett?" she added, nodding to a thin, shabbily dressed woman who had just come in. "This is my lawyer from Lincoln's Inn Fields just come down to 'ave a bit of a talk with me abaht my new spere. That's 'is taxi-cab at the door. And if there isn't your Bob a-gettin' in! Well, that child 'as a nerve!"

"Come out this very moment, Bob!" shouted Mrs. Bassett shrilly. "I hope you'll excuse 'im, sir. He's 'ad butcher-meat for 'is dinner, which doesn't happen often, and 'is spirits is that 'igh."

"Don't your children have meat every day, then, Mrs. Bassett?" inquired Mr. Lirrip, whose dinner was a serious matter to him.

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"Lord, no, sir!" she answered, with a tired smile. "Why, we 'ave enough to do to get bread. You see my 'usband used to be a gasfitter; but now 'e's socialist, and don't care about workin' except at trades union prices, and not always then. Not that I think 'e'd have time to work, even then," she added somewhat bitterly; "what with makin' speeches and goin' to unemployed processions and meetings, and the rest of the time goin' the round of the publics, his day are pretty well taken up. I 'ear they're going to take away the licenses. A good day for many it'll be if they do."

"Well, well," put in Sara; "I dare say it ain't very interesting to Mr. Lirrip, 'earing all about your Jim. He'd like me to make 'im a present of 'alf my new income, I dare say, would your Jim. It's workin' between meals that he objects to, I'll wager. Pickin' oakum for the country's good is the kind of work that suits 'is class; and not unknown in 'is fam'ly, neither."

"Ah well, Sara, if Jim's cousin by marriage 'as done time, so 'as many in the station of life you're going to. And you may come to it yourself if you get into the right circulars. Well, I always did say you 'ad an air beyond your seeming station, Sara Grub; and though you have a sharp tongue, you'll be missed in War Lane, that's very certain. And now I suppose you'll be ' my lady ' and all."

"Oh no," said Mr. Lirrip. "Mrs. Grub has come into a fair amount of money. But she will still be Mrs. Grub — unless, of course, she marries again."

"Not me," said the plump heiress, shaking her head emphatically. "Thirty-two years ago, when I was a slip of a girl of eighteen or so, I married Benja-

THE OTHER SARA

min Grub, and Grub by name and Lord by name he was. However, the Lord mercifully saw fit to remove him when we'd only been three years wedded, and that was enough of married for me. And now that I've a solid fortune of my own, I'm not going to be snapped up by a parcel of fortune-jugglers, who'd be glad to marry a Hottentot genius, so long as she 'ad coin — not if I know it. I know men through and through."

"But," said Mr. Lirrip, with a courteous bow, "I see no reason why you should not by-and-by, perhaps, make a wise and happy choice —"

"Beggin' your pardon, sir, I don't want no talk of that kind," interrupted Sara, with a brightened colour. "As I was sayin', I know men. I've seen them high, and I've seen them low — for I've been a monthly nurse in my time. Now, Eliza Bassett, I must ask you to look in another time, for, as you can see, this gentleman's taxi-cab is a-waitin', and no call for extra expense, even if money is going to be as plentiful as tin-tacks. And as for that wash-hand-stand you were speakin' of last night, I'll give you a good price for it if you look in about supper-time."

Mrs. Basset departed, annexing Bob on the way; and Mr. Lirrip proceeded to warn Mrs. Grub — very good-humouredly and tactfully — regarding a few of the social pitfalls that might await her in her new environment.

When he rose to go, Sara thanked him heartily.

"It's good of you to think of suchlike things, sir," she said; "for I can see I might be either affronted myself or the cause of affront in others. And I'm blowed if I know why I can't have my own 'ouse, if

THE OTHER SARA

I'm to 'ave all that money. I don't want to be planked down in other people's houses as don't want me."

"I'm afraid that can't be helped," said Mr. Lirrip. "Wills are rather arbitrary things; and, after all, ten thousand a year is worth some little sacrifice."

"Well, I don't know so much about that," demurred Sara. "I'd rather 'ave a couple of hundred a year and 'ave my own 'ome. However, I can but try it. I expect my 'air will be grey before I've 'ad six months of it, though. Well, good-day, sir, and thank you kindly."

When Mr. Lirrip had gone, Sara sat for some time in deep thought, her rough, seamed hands folded in her lap.

"I don't know as I like it," she sighed, as she looked round lovingly at the dingy place that had been her home for so long. "It'll be an awful kind of wrench. No — I reelly don't know as I like it."

An elderly hatchet-faced woman appeared suddenly through a doorway partially blocked by chairs, baths, boxes, etc.

"Is that you, Mullins?" asked Sara.

"Who else should it be?" was the grim answer. "Yes, it's me. Is anythink the matter?"

"No, Mullins, no, not in a way of speakin'. But my lawyer from Lincoln's Inn Fields has just been 'ere —"

"I saw 'im," said Mullins. "He ain't much to look at."

"Well," pursued Sara, "he says it'll be necessary for me to have a maid when I go to Bryanston Square."

"'Ave a maid?" repeated Mullins. "What for?"

THE OTHER SARA

"I don't know," the other replied dejectedly. appears the quality allus 'as 'em. And now tl come to think of it, they do mention 'em in the f novelettes — not that I've read many of 'em — a of unnatural rubbish!"

Mullins took three hairpins out of her hair, an liberately replaced them.

"Look 'ere," she said slowly. "I'm a maid, I?"

Sara assented.

"And," went on Mullins, "I've done odds and for you in the 'ouse and in the shop for a matt three years or more, and so you know, or oug know, that I'm honest and to be trusted. A know your ways and your tempers, and if you sick of your fine folks, you and I could sit up: and let 'em have it hot all to ourselves."

"Lord, Mullins! but do you think you'd like demurred Sara.

"Well, I'm suggestin' it, ain't I? The questi whether you'd like it?"

"Rath-er!" was the emphatic answer. "But : have to dress me, and do my hair, and see tha clothes was kep' decent."

"Well, and wot of that? As for your hair and clothes, I bet I'd get you up a sight better nor y got up now," was the brief answer. "And I us do dressmakin', as you well know, before my Bill to sea and got drowned. But, of course, if you better suited with some French whigmaleerie, say so, and ha' done with it."

"There, Mullins, don't be aggravatin'. Well know I couldn't speak a word of French to sav

THE OTHER SARA

life. If you're willin' to come with me as a maid, I'm more than glad; for I can tell you I don't half like my prospect's — money or no money."

"Oh, you'll get over that," said the other dryly. "In a month or two you won't know yourself. I've always heard that goin' up in the world's a sight easier than comin' down, and chance it."

"Well, well, I wish I was well out of it," sighed Sara, rising, and shaking out her skirt. "Money's a mare, whether come by rightly or wrongly. If you've too little, you either steal or starve, or drown yourself; and if you've too much, you fret and grizzle, as I see well I'm going to do. It ain't goin' to be no picnic, we can well see."

"Now, Sara Grub, don't fly in the face of Providence," snapped Miss Mullins. "You've got what many a woman and any man would sell their soul for; so be thankful, and don't do no unnecessary grumblin'. I only wish I was in your shoes. And talkin' of shoes reminds me. We'd best arrange what I'm to have a year for the maid business. You see, your cast-off clothes won't be of no use to me, owin' to you bein' short and stout, and me bein' tall and thin; which is a pity, for no doubt they'll be 'andsome. So that'll have to be considered in the wages."

"Yes, that's true," assented Sara. "Well, suppose I give you a ten-pound note to rig yourself out with this minute; and then, when we've got there, you can name a figure, and I won't grudge it, you may be sure."

"Right oh!" said Mullins, with an appreciative nod. "You'll grudge it less now than you will later on. Ten thousand a year sounds a lot; but I've

THE OTHER SARA

heard it doesn't go so far as you might think, taking into account the way them toffs live. Why, I sor a dressing-gown in one of them West End shops marked as cool as you please twenty guineas — and quite plain, mind you, and a cheap-lookin' silk at that. And hats, if you'll believe me, five and six guineas apiece. And as for joolry — well, thousands ain't in it."

"And Mr. Lirrip says I can easily keep a carriage and pair," said Sara. "And you may be sure I'll drive down 'ere pretty often, just to show them. Besides, I'll want to know how old Widow Claptry manages this place," she added, looking round regretfully. "And you bet, if I ain't 'appy as a toff, back I'll come, and the money may go to blazes. I wasn't going to give up the old shop, not for fifty fortunes — not me. And it'll be a charity to old Widow Claptry for the few more years she has to live."

"Oh, she'll be in clover," said Mullins. "Though what she's done to deserve it I don't know. But it's always the way in this world — do your duty, and no one takes no notice; and please yourself, and fitted-out shops and enough to live on's handed to you. However, I ain't complainin'. Straight! — but it's a good thing you learned to write, Sara Grub, or it's little use that dossy new cheque-book'd be to you. Ten pounds," she added, as she examined the slip of paper Sara handed to her. "I'll nip round and change it at the Dolphin. Thanking you kindly."

Chapter III

It was raining heavily, and a boisterous rain was raging in and around Bryanston. A shabby four-wheeler, laden with a great many pieces of baggage, stopped at No. 397.

Little Anne Hamersley, who was standing at the drawing-room windows, peering out into the rain, exclaimed excitedly and ungrammatically:

"That must be her. Yes, it is."

A few minutes later Sara was in the family circle. The circle was augmented, indeed, it usually was — by Evan Rolleston Agnew.

When the first greetings were over, Sara greeted herself with a weary bang on a delicately padded cushion and gazed round her appreciatively.

"Well, here I am at last," she said to herself. "What a job I had to get everything settled up, and all the things packed. As for Mullins, she's come this mornin'."

"Yes? Who is Mullins?" inquired Evan Rolleston Agnew frostily.

"Well, she's my maid, in a way of speaking," replied Mrs. Agnew.



THE OTHER SARA

thought she'd like the place. But, Lor', I guess she knows no more about bein' a 'andy maid than I do."

"I dare say you would like to go to your room now," said Mrs. Hamersley, trying to speak cordially, and to conceal her displeasure at Terence's marked delight in the new-comer. "Sallie, take Mrs. — er — Grub upstairs, will you? I dare say, by the way, she would prefer to dine in her room to-night," she added.

"No, thank you, cousin," answered Sara, her naturally sweet temper ruffled by the barely concealed air of superiority in the other's look and tone. "I don't 'old with takin' meals in bedrooms. I'll just warm my feet a bit, though, before I go up to wash my 'ands. Thank you kindly, sir," she said, as Terence rolled forward a chair for her, and disencumbered her of the cloak which she had sternly refused to yield to the footman. "There, that's comfortable; for, say what you like, it's a long cold drive from Limehouse."

"By Jove, I believe you!" agreed Terence heartily.

"And it's a great thing to be warm," continued Sara, as she held her stoutly clad feet to the cheerful blaze. "I allus say: 'Keep me warm, and you'll keep me virtuous.' But cold raises the very devil in me; and, say what you will, the saints of old lived in warm countries, or they couldn't 'ave gone about in the flop-like clothes they seemingly wore."

Here Sallie, who had left the room a few minutes ago, returned, and held out her hands to the fire, as she knelt on the hearthrug. Mrs. Hamersley had gone into the back drawing-room to answer a note.

"I'm so vexed, Cousin Sara," Sallie said regretfully, "but they've allowed the fire in your bedroom to get quite low. However, it'll soon burn up now, I think."

THE OTHER SARA

"Bless your pretty face and kind little 'eart, I don't never 'ave a fire in my bedroom," replied Mrs. Grub, peeling off her tight gloves backwards, and rolling them into a ball. "Excep' in sickness, I think it's nothin' but a waste. However, I don't deny I'll be glad of it in a strange bed. Now, what I want to ask you, my dear, is: Will this gown do to sit down to dinner in? For Mullins — her as 'ull be here to-morrow — says the gentry are always declodthey at dinner, which I understand, means low neck and arms; and I see your frock is cut low; and a very pretty frock it is, too, and nothing undecent. As for your mar's — well, the less said of it the better. There's nothing of it to speak of, anyhow. Now, I'll just go up to my bedroom, my dear, if you'll show me the way. And you'll tell me about my dress when we get there."

And, putting her arm affectionately through Sallie's, she waddled across the room to the door, which Evan opened with grave, unsmiling courtesy.

"Thank you, sir," she said, looking up at him with shrewd, kindly eyes. "We'll be better friends by-and-by, I hope. And a sweet little wife you're going to 'ave, I will say, and the Lord bless you both! You've got some nice bits of furniture here, cousin," she added, turning to Mrs. Hamersley; "but that there old cabinet's an awful bit of fake. Straight! — but, there, I'll tell you abaht it when I come down."

"Now, dearie, wait with me a bit, and help me to choose a gown," said Mrs. Grub, when they had reached her room. "You think this wouldn't do — eh? Well, it is a bit muddy and dragley round the hem for we'd a sharp bit of a shower this arternoon,

THE OTHER SARA

and I had to rush abaht here and there seeing to things. I've a black merino, cut V-shaped in front. Do you think that would do?"

Sallie inspected the black merino carefully, and thought it might "do;" but when the garment was donned she thought differently. It was tight where it ought to be loose, and loose where it ought to be tight, and altogether seemed absolutely hopeless.

Sallie fetched some white lace of her own to arrange upon the curiously cut bodice. But even then she could not help acknowledging that the general effect was rather awful.

"Don't you worry, my lamb," said Mrs. Grub easily, as she surveyed her plump image in the long mirror, "for I can see you have your doubts. As for your mar, she'll look me up and down as if I'd come out of a penny show. But to-morrow you and me 'ull do some shoppin,' if you don't mind, and you'll give me a 'and in buyin' some fal-lals; for I don't want to affront all by bein' behind the fashions, and no need, if I'm rollin' in money. But mind, Sallie, I won't 'ave your mar gimlettin' me with them boot-button eyes of hers; and so I tell you. I can't 'elp havin' money lef' me with silly conditions tagged on; and I ain't goin' to be sat on, payin' a 'andsome board an' all. Now, where the mischief is that bonnet-box?" she added anxiously.

"Never mind it; we'll find it after dinner," said Sallie. "There's the gong. We'd better go down."

"Lor', child! I want my best bonnet out. Do you suppose I'm goin' downstairs with my head as bare as a infant's?"

"But you don't want to wear a bonnet at dinner,"

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remonstrated Sallie; "and I've just done your hair so nicely."

"Hair or no hair," was the decided answer, "I ain't goin' to stir without my bonnet on. Ah, 'ere it is! And a smart bonnet it is, though I say it as shouldn't."

Sallie regarded the bonnet and its wearer in silence, and thought of her stepmother. The bonnet was a singular structure, composed of magenta rose and scarlet ribbon, tied with pink tulle beneath the wearer's plump chin.

"There! I think I'll do," she said, smiling at Sallie's dubious face. "Shall I put on a pair of lemon-coloured gloves?" she added. "I 'ave a pair here, quite 'andy."

"No, I think not," answered Sallie hastily; "and, oh, I say, Cousin Sara, I don't think I'd wear the bonnet — I shouldn't really. Mother won't like it."

"Get along with you," said Sara, giving her a playful poke. "I'm an old woman, and you're a young one. I'd feel a fool with nothin' on my head."

"All right," rejoined Sallie, surrendering herself to the inevitable. "Come along. Mother hates to be kept waiting. After all, one wears a hat when one goes out to lunch, and there are occasions when one dines in one; so why not a bonnet at a family dinner?"

Meanwhile Terence, downstairs, was remonstrating with his aunt regarding her reception of Sara.

"You know there isn't a bit of use in putting on such awful side and frills, and making things unpleasant all round," he said, as he stood with his back to the fire, leaning against the mantelpiece. "Why



THE OTHER SARA

not chum up to her, and let us be a happy family? Who knows but the old girl might die and divide her money among us on her death-bed?"

"Oh, nonsense! She may live as long as any of us, or longer," answered his aunt sharply. "Besides, you forget that if she dies all her money must go to some charity. She is even worse than I thought she was. She is like a — a charwoman. I don't know what the servants will think."

"Oh, hang the servants! Who cares what they think?" answered her nephew, with a shrug. "My dear aunt, how you do worry about what people of all sorts and conditions may say. If all London maintained that I had a tail, and six toes on each foot, I shouldn't care a twopenny screw."

Here the door opened, and a servant announced "Professor Mangell" — with the accent on the last syllable, be it noted. Few things annoyed the professor more than to have his name pronounced as we pronounce the name of a piece of furniture belonging to the laundry.

Professor Mangell was elderly and very upright; his face was brown and clean-shaven, his skin withered, and his eyes very bright. He had beautiful white hair, which was brushed into a curious, stiffly upright twist on the crown of his head.

"How do you do? how do you do? how do you do?" he exclaimed genially, as he clasped Mrs. Hammersley's hand. "I was in the neighbourhood — in the neighbourhood, you know, and just looked in to ask you and Miss Sallie to come to my lecture on 'Coffins of the Middle Ages.' I won't ask these young men. Ha, ha! they'd find my lectures dull, I fear — dull,

THE OTHER SARA

you understand. But where is Miss Sallie? No gone out, I hope — not gone out?"

"Sallie will be here directly," said Mrs. Hamersley, with her most amiable smile.

For the professor, though more than a little eccentric, was of good family, exceedingly rich, and moved in what Mrs. Hamersley was wont to allude to as "the best circles," and was also more than suspected of a desire to marry Sallie. True, Sallie had already promised to marry Evan; but her stepmother did not look upon this indefinite engagement as a barrier to a more advantageous settlement, should such present itself.

As the door opened to admit Sallie and "the other Sara," Mrs. Hamersley's smile resolved itself into a fixed ghastly grin of dismay.

Professor Mangell moved forward to greet Sallie, and Sallie introduced him to the new cousin.

"Good evening, sir," said Mrs. Grub graciously. "I see you don't remember me?"

Mrs. Hamersley's face relaxed somewhat. If Mrs. Grub proved to be an acquaintance of the professor, why, she might be "explained" in some way, after all; and yet — it was surely impossible.

But, alas! the professor's puzzled expression dashed her hopes again.

"I — no; I'm afraid I really don't quite recall your name," he stammered. "But your face is quite familiar. Really, you must forgive my stupidity, but —"

Sara laughed, and her laugh was, in its way, as irresistible as Sallie's.

"Why 'ave you forgot Grub's antique and modern

THE OTHER SARA

stores in War Lane, Limehouse?" she said. "Many a queerio I've sold you, professor — and dirt cheap some of them were. But, there, you always were a gentleman with a way with you; and I will say you have the eye of an expert, when all's said and done."

"Mrs. Grub is our second cousin," said Sallie in a clear voice. "We have only just discovered her; and we are all going to be great friends."

"God bless my soul! how extraordinary!" exclaimed the professor. "Is that so — is that really so? Dear me — dear me! I shall miss my expeditions to Limehouse — I really shall. I suppose you have given up the — er — the emporium?"

"I've give the shop to a widow of the name of Claptry," answered Sara. "She'll see to you whenever you want a bargain, for you was one of the special customers I mentioned to her as wasn't to be done out of their money by any fakements of furniture made up to look like old. Lord! fancy meetin' you at the house of my own cousins, once removed. Straight if it ain't like a play."

Here the dinner-gong sounded loudly, to Mrs. Hamersley's inexpressible relief; and, accepting the professor's offered arm, she motioned to Evan to take down Sara the firebrand.

Terence, in a subdued ecstasy at his aunt's undisguised chagrin, followed with Sallie.

"I say, isn't she a peach? Isn't she a gem?" he whispered joyously. "And isn't Aunt Selina in a paddy! But, tell me — just as a matter of curiosity — why does our Cousin Grub grace the family dinner-table with her bonnet on? Is that the mode in Limehouse?"

THE OTHER SARA

"Heaven knows," giggled Sallie. "I tried to persuade her against it; but it was no use."

In a minute or so Sara had seated herself, and was taking her bearings. She devoured her soup — not in silence, but without speech, and with evident relish.

"My! ain't this a fine sight?" she said in an undertone to Evan, who was amused by, and rather interested in, his self-possessed neighbour — "the table I mean, and the flowers, and the lights. I like them branch-candlesticks. Genooin' old Sheffield, too, and difficult to pick up nowadays. But they do give a air, and make gas kind of flaring and vulgar-like. It must cost a lot, all these fruits and confectionery and things. Why, I dare say there ain't a penny less than a sovereign's worth of flowers, for well I know their price, 'avin' a friend in Covent Garden Market. 'Ave you ever been in the market at four or five in the mornin', sir?"

Evan admitted that he had not.

"Well, it's a queer show," said Sara; "and the smells throw you back into the country. I suppose you're going to marry that pretty young creature they call Sallie."

"I hope so," he answered.

"Well, I wish you all happiness, I'm sure — no, thank you, young man; I never touches fish, through once bein' served with a putrid 'addock, and nearly pizened, in a fried-fish shop off Tottenham Court Road" (this to a solemn attendant who had proffered red mullet in cases). "Well, Mr. Rollestone, I wish you joy, for not only is she as pretty as a pictur', accordin' to my taste, but I'm sure she 'as a 'eart of gold

THE OTHER SARA

besides. Gee-whilikins! but that's a nice old side-board; and yet, I'm not sure but the right-hand dror ain't faked. The 'andles ain't old, that I'll swear. No, thanks, I don't take no wine. Scriptur' says it's good for the stomach; but give me a good glass of four-ale or stout, I don't mind which. Hi, my man!" she called out to the petrified butler, "a glass of four-ale 'ere, if you 'ave it. If not, I'll wait till you send out for it."

"I'm afraid," said Mrs. Hamersley, in an indescribable voice, "that we cannot offer you ale, Mrs. Grub, unless they have some in the servants' hall. What did you say, Barker? Oh, very well, you had better bring some."

To Mrs. Hamersley's inward rage the professor seemed genuinely pleased at this meeting with Sara, and pointedly addressed her several times.

"I didn't know you had relatives in Limehouse, my dear Mrs. Hamersley," he said to his hostess in an undertone. "I positively had no idea of it — no idea. I have the greatest respect for Mrs. Grub. I have known her — er — emporium for years."

"I can assure you we have no other relatives from Limehouse," she answered, with an affected laugh. "Mrs. Grub is a distant relative of my late husband's — *no* connection whatever of mine. By some absurd will she is to be settled here until she dies or marries — neither very likely contingencies, I fear. She is very wealthy, and so, I suppose, imagines she can dress and act as she pleases."

This with a vicious glance at the rampant bonnet.

"Then she has quite recently come into a fortune?" inquired the professor, gazing at Sara through his gold

THE OTHER SARA

~~gratitude~~ "Really, quite romantic — quite — quite. ~~She is an~~ estimable person, and will be a cheerful and ~~entertaining~~ companion for you," he added.

~~But~~ his hostess stiffened and coloured angrily.

"I'm afraid I have nothing in common with that ~~kind of person.~~" she answered in an arctic voice. "I ~~and~~ Mrs. Grub both vulgar and offensive. No amount ~~of money~~ could palliate such a personality."

Here Sara's rough but kindly voice boomed across the table.

"By the way, professor," she said, "did you ever ~~get~~ that cabinet you was lookin' for last month? for it you 'aven't, I have a friend as keeps a rag and bone shop —"

"Evan, have you seen about those tickets?" interrupted Mrs. Hamersley hurriedly.

"Not yet. I shall to-morrow," he answered, as Sara drew a deep breath.

"I can see, Cousin Hamersley, you don't like me mentioning a rag and bone shop," she said, her healthy face assuming a deeper colour. "But I 'ave a friend as keeps a rag and bone shop, and I ain't goin' to chuck old friends — no, nor keep my mouth shut about 'em as though I was ashamed of 'em — no, not if I'd come into millions. As I was goin' to tell the professor — and many a cosy chat we've 'ad in my shop in War Lane — if he hasn't got his cabinet, my friend picked up one for nex' to nothin', though wantin' doing up; and 'as it in his back shop covered with old sackin — for I said to him that Professor Mangell ought to 'ave the chance of it, and so he shall; and 14, Fish Court, is the address — just next to the Box and Scissors."

THE OTHER SARA

"Thank you, Mrs. Grub," said the professor, as he noted down the address. "I am infinitely obliged to you. I can quite rely upon your judgment as to its being genuine, I know."

"Well, it's true what I don't know about old furniture you could put in your eye," returned Sara complacently. "No, thanks, young man — no ice-puddens' for me, for I've heard they're apt to cause crool pains, and I don't want to give trouble in a strange 'ouse in the dead of night, callin' for brandy and such-like. Ah, you may laugh, young gentleman," she continued, nodding good-humouredly to Terence. "But it ain't no joke. I knows, and maybe you don't."

When the servants had left the room, Sara leaned back in her chair and crossed her hands over her extensive waistband.

"Well, I 'ave made a 'earty meal, I 'ave," she said contentedly. "I will say, cousin, you're lucky in your cook. Not a thing burned or underdone, or messy, nor not a cinder. Arter all, feelin' means a lot to some folks. And I never can understand, professor, 'ow a sensible man like you can 'ave the heathenish ideas of food you've often spoke to me of; and not a blessed thing 'ave you swallowed since we set down but oyster-soup and cold tea, which is an awesome mixture, say what you will; which I understood porridge was your usual."

"You see, there was no time to make the professor's porridge," laughed Sallie. "If I were your wife, professor, I should change your régime entirely."

"If you were my wife, my dear Miss Sallie, I dare say everything would be very, very different. Doubt-

THE OTHER SARA

less you would have your way in — er — in all things.”

“Well, that’s ’andsome,” said Sara approvingly; “and no one couldn’t say more. But there, professor, young girls is for young men, and young men for young girls. You’d no more take the fancy of Miss Sallie than I’d take the fancy of that young gentleman there,” she added, indicating Terence with a nod.

“My dear Mrs. Grub, don’t be too sure of that,” said Terence seriously, but with a wicked twinkle in his eyes. “I can assure you that from the instant you entered the room I felt most extraordinarily nervous and queer — shook all over, you know, and —”

“Oh, don’t talk such foolishness,” laughed Sara. “Nervous you’re not, nor ever could be, or I’ll eat my bonnet.”

“No, please don’t, Mrs. Grub,” he entreated. “It’s a lovely bonnet. I say, do you know that you and I are cousins? It’s a fact. If you’re Sallie’s cousin, you must be mine, because she’s mine — my cousin, I mean: not mine altogether, worse luck, while old Evan’s to the fore.”

Here Mrs. Hamersley rose and pioneered Sara and Sallie to the drawing-room, whither Terence followed them almost immediately.

The professor lingered to explain to Evan the theory of the discovery of coal by the new process (invented by the professor) of soaking the ground with petroleum. If the soaked earth ignited on the application of a light, it was a certain indication of the presence of coal; if not — *not*.

“Won’t it be rather an expensive process?” sug-

gested Evan. "There must be a good bit of where there is no coal."

"My good young man, there is practically coal everywhere, if you only dig deep enough. So, you it would only be in the comparatively few places where there is none that the expenditure of petroleum would be useless. I'm going to lecture upon it at Marlinton House next week. I expect it will make rather a stir in the scientific world. Now, shall I go upstairs. Miss Hamersley is singing, and her voice gives me great pleasure — very great pleasure."

Chapter IV

NEXT morning Sara made the acquaintance of the children, Anne and Alec, who had been hustled off to bed last night shortly after their new cousin's arrival.

Sara herself was downstairs early — much too early, as the presence of one or two domestics with brooms and dusters testified. The footman, in his shirt-sleeves, and rather dishevelled generally (it was a special grievance of Mrs. Hamersley's that she could only afford one footman), hastened to open the front door for the new arrival, under the erroneous impression that she was going out. This impression was conveyed by her bonnet — not the gorgeous affair of the night before, but the black one with heliotrope bows reminiscent of War Lane, which Sara considered quite good enough for morning wear.

"Bless you, young man! I ain't goin' out at present," she said good-naturedly — "not until I've some sort of meal inside me. Ain't it nearly breakfast-time? We keep earlier hours down our way."

"Breakfast is at half-past eight, madam," answered the man respectfully, remembering that this queer-looking person of his own class was wealthy, and might be supposed to give handsome tips if properly conciliated.

"Lor', my lad, don't 'madam' me. I ain't a Frenchy; though I 'ave been told I've a sort of foreign style. But we're all as we're made, thank God!"

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And she retired upstairs again, serenely unconcerned by the giggling housemaids in the background.

When she came down an hour later she found Alec sitting on the hearthrug before the fire, playing with the fox terrier before he had been introduced to her.

"Good morning, my little dears," said Sara. "Are you going to give me a kiss?"

After a moment's hesitation Anne complied.

"I don't generally kiss strangers," she announced frankly; "but somehow I like your face."

"I don't want to kiss you, thank you," said Sara somewhat gruffly. "I'm not going to make a cheap show of you just because you're rich. Anne is as she likes. Girls are such toadies."

"Don't mind what he says, Cousin Sara," said Anne, noting the hurt look in Sara's eyes. "I'm just the same if you hadn't any money; don't mind you being what mother calls vulgar. I think you look just as kind as I do. And look at Winkle. He wants you to pat him, but he scarcely ever makes friends with strangers. He's an awfully reserved dog. Just see how he's pushing his nose into your hand."

Sara patted the dog, who gently licked her face. Then Alec walked out of the room, with his hands in his pockets.

"Had you never any children?" asked Anne, leaning against Sara's knee.

"Never but one, my dearie," Sara answered. "I lost her many a long year ago, when she was about your age."

"Did she die?" said Anne softly.

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"Yes, she died. One cold bitter winter she died."

"I'm sorry," whispered Anne.

"Ah, well, my pretty, the doctor said she would allus 'ave been ailin'. So maybe it was for the best. But she was a pretty little creatur', bless her!" and Sara's voice trembled—"a pretty, lovin' little thing, and such winnin' ways she had. Ah, well, well!"

Once more Anne put up her face to kiss her.

"I love you, dear old Sara," she said. "Don't you mind what mother says. She's always cross—and more than cross with me, because I'm not pretty. I can't help it, and I don't care."

"My dearie, you'll always be pretty to them that loves you," said Sara consolingly. "Looks ain't everything. If all tales is true, I was a 'andsome girl in my teens, and what's it ever done for me? Landed me as Mrs. B. Grub, and that was all."

"Was Mr. Grub not very nice?" inquired Anne.

"Well, no, in a way of speakin', he wasn't," said Sara darkly. "He was a 'eap older than me, and his ways wasn't my ways. He kep' a public-house when I married him, and I will say he was 'is own best customer; and naturally carried off at last, ravin' and shriekin' more like a wild beast than a 'uman man."

"Who carried him off?" asked the child, in an awesome voice.

"Death carried him off, my pretty; and quite time, too. Well, well, we all 'ave our troubles, 'igh and low."

Here Mrs. Hamersley came into the room, a frown on her face, and a bundle of letters in her hand.

"Good morning, Mrs. Grub," she said, taking Sara's

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hand limply in hers. "Anne, why are you not in the nursery?"

"Nursery breakfast is late," replied the child. "Miss Cave has a very bad headache."

"Oh, Miss Cave is very tiresome," said Mrs. Hamersley. "She is always having headaches."

"Can't I have breakfast with you and Sallie and Cousin Sara?" coaxed Anne.

"No; certainly not. Run away at once."

The child went sulkily out of the room, and her mother rang the bell for breakfast somewhat sharply. Then she said:

"Mrs. Grub, might I ask you to do me a personal favour?"

"Certainly," replied Sara. "If it's a matter of money, however, I should like to begin as I mean to go on — that's to say, in a way of speaking, I don't 'old with bein' a kind of savin's bank for those as is only civil to me for what I has; but a five-pound note, or even ten, I will go to, if asked civilly as one lydy to another."

"My request has nothing to do with money," was the haughty answer. "I merely want to ask you not to wear those ridiculous bonnets in my house. If you must wear something upon your head, I can take you to a milliner who will make you some respectable caps. As it is, you are making yourself a laughing-stock to the very servants."

Now, as it happened, Sara had been contemplating the advisability of substituting caps for bonnets; but Mrs. Hamersley's remarks scattered the half-formed resolution to the winds.

The lady from Limehouse had a temper, though it

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was usually kept in the background, and it flared out now.

"What do I care about your servants?" she exclaimed fiercely; "or what do I care for you and your opinions, for that matter? The Lord knows I didn't want to come 'ere, any more than you wanted to 'ave me. I never dreamed money was to be lef' me, and arrangements made that only a ass would 'ave thought of. But now I am 'ere, and goin' to pay good money for my keep and lodgin', I ain't a going to be bullied and browbeaten — no, not if you was my cousin fifty times removed. Who are you, may I ask, to give yourself the airs of a empress, and nothin' to show for it? So there you 'ave it, plump and plain. If my ways affront you, maybe your ways affront me. You don't like my coverin' up my 'ead, and I don't like you uncoverin' your bosom. With a nursin' mother it's different, 'aving been one myself, though years ago. So, as we've got to live together whether we likes it or not, is it to be peace and quiet, or is it to be the other thing?"

Here Sallie came in, fresh and sweet-looking in a trim blue serge coat and skirt and a cream-coloured blouse.

"So sorry I'm late, mother," she exclaimed; "but everything seemed to conspire against me this morning. And it was so cold, I could scarcely persuade myself out of bed. Good-morning, Cousin Sara. I hope you slept nicely. Come and let's have breakfast. I'm simply starving."

"Your stepmar and I have been 'avin' a bit of a bust-up," said Sara; "but I'm willin' to let bygones be bygones, if no more's said."

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"Oh, mother loves having busts-up," laughed Sallie, as she seated herself—"don't you, mother? What's it all been about?"

"Please go on with your breakfast, Sallie," said her mother sharply. "I am not aware that I am fond of what you and Mrs. Grub call 'busts-up.' If your poor father had been alive I should not have been subjected to the daily insults I receive from you. Even the very children set me at defiance —"

An angry sob drowned the rest of the sentence.

"There, there! Buck up, mother!" said Sallie soothingly. "You'll cry all the powder off your nose. Have a cup of tea and some kidney and bacon."

When the meal was half over Sallie said:

"Now, I suppose we must take our cousin shopping to-day. When shall we start, mother?"

"Oh, I don't know," was the fretful answer. "I have so much to do I don't know where to turn, and it takes such a time to get from one place to another. I do wish we could afford a motor. Horses are so slow."

"Not if you don't want to be in too many places at once," said Sara cheerfully. "Motors are all very well, but they never, to my mind, have the look of a well-appointed carriage and pair."

"There I'm with you, my girl," said Sara in a voice of hearty acquiescence. "A carriage and pair's my fancy, too; and one I'm going to 'ave before the week's out."

"Shall I see about it for you?" asked Mrs. Hamersley languidly.

"Thank you kindly, cousin, no," was the dry answer. "My lawyer, Mr. Lirrip's, arrangin' about it."

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Women's ideas are all very well in the domestic line; but when it comes to 'osses and dogs, give me a man."

"Well, when shall we go, mother?" said Sallie once more.

"Oh, I don't care. Good gracious! is that the time? And I have a thousand things to do before lunch. Really, I sometimes feel as if my head would burst."

"Well, mother, why do you make all these engagements, and run your nerves to pieces trying to fulfil them all? You don't really have to."

"Nonsense, child! You know very well that if you want to keep your place in society, and make desirable acquaintances, you must toil and slave, and — oh dear! — I am sick of it."

"Then why do it?" asked Sallie, helping herself to a second egg. "For my part, I don't care if I never see what you call 'society' again; and as for desirable acquaintances, I've quite as many as I want — and more."

"Oh, don't be absurd!" said the other angrily. "One might as well be dead as not keep up with the crowd."

"Well, I'd rather be comfortably dead than scramble and tear through life as you do, and wear yourself out for a swarm of people that wouldn't care if you were ruined or buried to-morrow. However, to return to Cousin Sara. Shall I take her, as you are so busy? Should you like to go shopping with me, Cousin Sara?" she added.

"Indeed, I just would. Your stepmar and I would be at loggerheads in no time. But maybe you are

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busy, too, my dear. Maybe I'd better just go by myself."

"Oh no, I'm not busy," answered the girl briskly. "And even if I were, I always make time to do what I want to do. Then that's fixed; and we will take a hansom or a taxi. I suppose you'll want the brougham, mother?"

"Yes, of course. I feel so nervous in those taximeters, ever since poor Lady Wyatt was almost frightened to death by one taking fire, and she couldn't get out. And hansoms are so dangerous; and one never knows what one may catch in a four-wheeler. Some more coffee, Mrs. Grub? No? Then, if you'll excuse me, I've some letters to write before I go out."

"I don't think," said Sara, when she and Sallie were alone, "that there's goin' to be any love lost between your stepmar and me. It seems a pity. But there — I don't suppose she can 'elp it, any more nor I can, nor no more nor a dog can help chasin' a cat; though I will say I 'ad a cat and dog as ate out of the selfsame plate, and not a growl nor a spit. But I don't see your stepmar and me eatin' out of the same plate — not much."

"Mother's a bit difficult sometimes," admitted Sallie. "But I dare say you'll get on all right by-and-by. Now, when shall we start? Could you be ready by half-past eleven?"

"Lor', yes, my dear. I ain't got nothin' to do but look at my fingers. But what about your young man? Won't he want you?"

"Oh no; he isn't free till after four. By the way, what about your maid? Has she come, I wonder?"

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"I don't know, my dear. She may be here, and she mayn't. But I would like to know for certain, for I dare say she'd be a bit flabbergasted if she came while I was out."

"Yes, of course. I'll ring and ask."

Miss Mullins had come, it appeared on inquiry, and had just been taken up to her room.

From thence she descended in a sparsely made new gown of black alpaca, to help her mistress on with her "things."

"Well, Mullins, so you found your way all right," said Sara, as Mullins laid out upon the bed the magenta bonnet and a wonderful black silk garment of dolmanish shape, trimmed with what mistress and maid called "bugles."

"Oh, I got 'ere at larst, and a reg'lar swindlin' thief that cabman was. But I was even with him, for I give 'im a bad shillin' I've 'ad for years, though not noticed unless closely looked into. I suppose you'll want your elastic-sided boots, won't you?—not that I think the quality ever wears 'em. But they are comfortable, I will allow. *And* your purple silk."

"Mullins," said Sara impressively, "I may be rollin' in money—as I suppose I am—but I cert'ingly don't mean to set up for quality; for not only it must be fatiguin', from all accounts, but I shouldn't know the way. So it's elastic-sided boots, and loose, easy stays for me, fashion or no fashion."

Mullins smiled ambiguously.

"Ah, well, we'll see," she answered. "I suppose you're goin' to buy no end of fal-lals. See you don't let them toffish dressmakers and milliners make a fool of you, and deck you out like a woman 'alf your age;

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for you are gettin' on, Sara Grub, and there ain't no use pertendin' otherwise."

"Lor' bless you! I ain't pertendin' nothink," replied Sara good-humouredly. "I'm as I was made. And as to the years I've lived in the world, that's the Lord's concern, and none of mine. Now, just give me my crushed-strawberry coloured gloves to match my bonnet, and pour a good drop of eau de Cologne on my handkerchief. There, I can take my place with the best."

And she trotted downstairs to the morning-room, where Sallie, dressed to perfection, was awaiting her.

Sara noted with puzzled wonder as the cab rolled along Oxford Street that her young companion's dress comprised nothing that looked new, nor striking, nor specially "smart." But everything was harmonious, and of subdued tint, and was worn with an unconscious grace, that was, as Sara put it to herself, "uncommonly fetching." For the first time a faint doubt of her own taste in dress assailed her, and the magenta bonnet seemed to quarrel with the purple silk that looked so crude beside Sallie's pearl-grey cashmere.

As they turned into Bond Street, she said:

"I've brought that there cheque-book with me, so's I can pay for the things I buy right away. I dare say they'll lend me a pen."

"Oh yes, unless you'd like to open accounts. They like that quite as well," said Sallie.

"No, no, my girl; no runnin' bills for me; which I've seen the consikences in the evenin' papers scores of times. 'Ready money, or go without,' has allus been my motto. Poor or rich, it's all the sime."

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"All right," laughed Sallie. "But now we're going to Madame Viro's, and you can't give her a cheque until your gowns are made."

"Madame Viro? — is she a Frenchy?" asked Sara, rubbing her nose dubiously.

"Yes — at least, she married a Frenchman. Anyway, she is considered a very smart dressmaker. She's a bit expensive, to be sure, but she'll turn you out tip-top, if you just let her do what she likes with you. Here we are."

The cab had turned into a side-street, and now stopped at a small green door, flanked by an oval-shaped window. In the window lay a length of artistically crumpled silk of a pale rose shade, and across it was flung carelessly a piece of cobwebby lace of delicate design.

"Lor', her window ain't much to look at," observed Sara disparagingly, as she paused to appraise the quality of the silk. "As for that dirty-looking lace, I've drors and drorsful of it in War Lane."

"Now, I like this window," said Sallie. "She has a different piece of silk and lace nearly every day, but never more than one exquisite piece of each. It reminds me of a jeweller's shop I know in Paris. The window is small, and entirely filled by one billowy piece of rich grey-green silk — just the colour of the sea over sand in mild sunshine — and in the centre of the silk hangs one large, creamy, satiny-looking pearl."

"Is that so? It sounds kind of mean," murmured Sara, to whom elegant simplicity did not appeal.

Sallie smiled; and they entered a small vestibule,

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where a door opened to receive them into a long, narrow room, carpeted in dull green, and with the walls entirely composed of mirrors. Even the door, when it was closed, became a mirror, too. Luxurious chairs were scattered here and there, and over one was flung a lovely pale blue brocade gown, one sleeve just touching the floor.

"It seems a queer kind of place," said Sara, seating herself heavily in one of the chairs, and regarding with vague dissatisfaction the various reflections of herself that seemed to multiply unendingly.

A tall, statuesque young woman glided slowly towards them, and bowed graciously to Sallie.

"Madame will receive you in a few moments," she said in a carefully cultivated foreign accent. "Your gown was sent home yesterday, mademoiselle. It goes well, n'est-ce pas? And madame, your mother — her white silk jupe is on the point of being finished."

One of the mirrors rolled back, leaving a space through which another room, upholstered in pale grey, was seen.

"Behold madame," said the statuesque young person, with a bend of her trimly corseted figure.

Whereupon Sallie preceded Sara into the presence of Madame Viro. The latter was a small woman, with a shrewd, delicate face, and a slight figure clad in black velvet.

Sallie and she interchanged a few rapid sentences, while Sara nervously tried to pull her bonnet straight before one of the many mirrors.

"But certainly yes; I quite understand," said Madame Viro. "But — mon Dieu! it will be un peu

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difficile. Nevertheless, if madame will kindly wait twice slowly across the room — so — merci beaucoup!”

Poor Sara obediently waddled across the room, her honest face almost as purple as her dress, while Madame Viro leaned back in a chair, and studied her new client through a pair of long-handled tortoise shell eyeglasses. After a prolonged survey, she dropped the glasses, and made a few notes on a set of gold-mounted tablets that hung by her side.

Then she rose, and waved Sara and her companion into a third room, which was upholstered in white and where two slim, black-clad maidens proceeded to divest the unwilling Sara of her “dolman” dress and underskirt, while Madame Viro again surveyed the lady from Limehouse through her eyeglasses more severely than before.

At last Sara stood, looking very unhappy, in a short red flannel petticoat and a baggy, brown, boneless corset. The contrast between these garments and the magenta bonnet and crushed-strawberry gloves was rather agonizing; but the black-clad maidens stood smilelessly at attention awaiting orders.

“But, mon Dieu! it is impossible to clothe madame unless with a proper corset,” Madame Viro said sharply. “That which madame is wearing is simply affreux — absolument affreux. Celeste, show madame our corset ‘Angelique.’”

Celeste glided away, to return almost immediately with a black satin corset embroidered in white, into which she laced the breathless Sara with surprising celerity.

“Ah! that goes better,” said the head of the estab-

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ishment, relaxing the frown that had disfigured her narrow forehead.

When Sara had been measured and remeasured, the autocrat said:

"That is well. Madame will come to approve the gowns on—" (here she consulted her notebook), "say in three days' time, as the matter is urgent. Meanwhile, I will send this evening a loose toilette de diner and toilette de visite; or perhaps it would be well that madame should now wear the toilette de visite; and in the matter of lingerie, madame will, of course, give me carte blanche. Good-afternoon, then, to madame and mademoiselle."

"But, 'ere, 'old on!" exclaimed the tightly-laced and panting Sara, finding her voice for the first time as the renowned dressmaker was leaving the room with yards of black velvet trailing behind her. "'Old on! I ain't seen no stuffs, nor colours, nor nothin' yet. I ain't goin' to buy no pigs in pokes. If I'm buyin' dresses, I wants to see 'em, and not go into them blindfold. As for givin' carte blanche—if that's French for a cheque, not a sign of it will you see until I sees my things."

Madame Viro paused at the door with a frosty stare.

"But I do not understand," she said frigidly. "Does madame mean that—"

"It's all right, Cousin Sara," said Sallie, in a reassuring tone. "Madame Viro will see that everything is just as it should be."

Whereupon madame retired, somewhat mollified, and one of the attendants closed the door softly as the last yard of velvet disappeared.

"And look 'ere, my gal," Sara said sharply, as

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Celeste was about to replace her stout moirette under-skirt by one of satin and lace, "take off them stays, or I'll bust. Why, a boa-constrictor would be nothin' to it. I'll be a choked corpse before we get 'alfway 'ome."

"Madame will grow used to her corset in time," said Celeste soothingly. "It is only because madame has been wearing that so very loose corset that madame's figure has spread a little."

But "madame" was obstinate, and at last matters were compromised by the staylace being slightly loosened, though even then the wearer groaned as one in purgatory.

Another attendant now entered with a filmy black robe of "princess" make, a sable cape, and a dainty bonnet of black gauze with deft touches of silver here and there.

Sara protested against the removal of the magenta bonnet, but yielded at last to Sallie's assurances that the black one was much more becoming and elegant.

"Well, I do look a dowd," she said, surveying herself discontentedly. "And as for them white gloves, why, they'll be as black as black before I've wore them once or twice."

"Indeed, Cousin Sara, you do look so nice," said Sallie pleadingly. "Do try to wear them, just to please me."

"Oh, get along, you coaxing little hussy! Well, you know you can get round me," was the gloomy answer.

"If madame would wear one of our magical transformations," suggested Celeste respectfully, "it would

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make a marked improvement in the set of madame's toque. Madame would look ten years younger."

"No, I shouldn't, Cousin Sara," said Sallie decidedly. "If your own hair was nicely waved you would have quite a quantity, and it would make a marvellous difference."

"Perhaps madame would just look at the transformation," persisted Celeste.

"Oh, all right, bring it along," was the resigned answer. "I may as well let myself go."

But when Celeste returned with a waved and curled arrangement of glittering auburn hair in her hand, Sara fairly screamed.

"What! wear a wig! — and a red-brown wig at that!" she exclaimed shrilly. "Why, I thought you meant a new kind of complexion veil. Sara Grub in a wig! Never! I'm not a play-actress, my gal, nor yet a fly-by-night. Me wear a wig! Not if every individjul hair was to drop from my 'ead this instant. Why, Benjamin Grub would turn in his grave — not that I'd care. But there, take the thing away."

"If madame would but try it on," said Celeste mildly.

"Well, there can't be no 'arm in tryin' it," was the dubious answer, after a pause.

Whereupon she seated herself, and shut her eyes with a queer little giggle that was half a sob. When she opened them the "transformation" was firmly fixed, and the bonnet pinned to it, with a white veil adorned with large spots tied over all.

As she caught sight of her reflection in the mirror she gave a cry of dismay.

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"O Lor'! " she wailed; "Jezebel ain't in it."

"I don't like it at all," said Sallie disapprovingly. "It's a horrid colour, and your own hair looks far nicer."

Celeste made no further protest, but removed the "wig," as Sara persisted in calling it, and replaced the bonnet and veil.

"At least madame will change her shoes," she said, with a glance at the enormous pair of elastic-sided boots that compelled attention as they protruded from under the smart lace and satin petticoat; for Sara had dragged up the skirt of her gown into a bunch under her arm preparatory to departure.

"Yes, Cousin Sara, you might try on a pair of shoes," said Sallie persuasively; for the elastic-sided boots really looked rather awful. "And you could keep them on, and the others could come later."

So Sara was presently having her feet squeezed into a pair of thin kid shoes with high heels, pointed toes, and steel buckles.

"I say, I carn't wear them gimcrack things," she protested; "and they're miles too small."

"Madame could not wear them any larger," Celeste assured her. "Madame's stockings are very thick; but when madame wears them with silk stockings, they will feel quite easy."

Sara struggled to her feet, and tottered to the door, only turning to say:

"Sallie, I'll take all my old things right back with me."

"But certainly. Madame shall have them this evening," answered Celeste, glancing with well-veiled disdain at Sara's belongings.

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"No, no, my gal," exclaimed their owner. "You'll be sellin' them by mistake to someone else. I know the tricks of these fine shops — though this place ought to take the bun for queerness. Come on, Sallie; for Gawd's sake let's get 'ome!"

When they were in the cab again, Sara suddenly exclaimed in a voice of dismay:

"Lor' — if I ain't clean forgot to ask the price of a blessed thing. Let's turn back."

"It'll be all right," said Sallie. "I can tell you the prices. Besides, you'll see when the bill comes in."

"Well, it seems a queer way of doin' things," murmured Sara discontentedly. "This bonnet, now. I reckon she'll charge me a suvrin for it, though the stuff couldn't 'ave cost a penny more than five-and-six, at the very outside."

"Why, Cousin Sara, that is a five-guinea bonnet," said Sallie. "Why, Madame Viro hasn't a thing in the place so cheap as a sovereign, except silk stockings, perhaps."

"Mercy on us!" exclaimed Sara. "And this fur thing," she added in an awed voice.

"Well," said Sara, carefully inspecting the garment in question; "you see, it is a lovely shade, and — oh, well, I should say, as spring will soon be here, Madame Viro would let you have it for three hundred and fifty."

"Three hundred and fifty!" almost screamed Sara. "Not never three hundred and fifty pounds!"

"More likely guineas," was the composed answer. "My dear cousin, you forget that you have an income of ten thousand a year, and you must dress up to it a bit."

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"Well, I calls it a cryin' sin," said Sara, "and rows and rows of pore creatures without a meal."

Then she added, with a groan:

"Oh, Sallie, so 'elp me! I can't stick them stays and them shoes. It ain't no use. Straight — I carn't. There ain't no use of 'avin' ten thousand a year if you've got to dress so as every breath's a agony; and as for my feet — well, Christian martyrs ain't in it. Are we goin' back to Bryanston Square? This ain't the 'ouse, is it?"

"Not yet," answered Sallie. "I'm just going to take you in here that you may have your hair waved and nicely dressed, and —"

"Not a wave nor a crimp," said the long-suffering neophyte wildly. "If I don't 'ave off them stays and shoes inside of five minutes, I'll be a howlin' lunatic; and so there you 'ave it, my gal."

Whereupon Sallie had pity, and gave the order for "home."

They reached Bryanston Square just as the gong was sounding for lunch, and met Mrs. Hamersley crossing the hall. For the first moment or two the latter simply did not recognize her cousin from the east. Then she said in an odd voice, for the sable cape was a bitter pill:

"Oh, it is you, Mrs. Grub! Really, I hardly knew you."

"And small blame to you," muttered Sara. "I ain't sure that I know myself."

"We've just come from Madame Viro's," said Sallie.

"What! you took her to Madame Viro's?" almost screamed her stepmother. "You dared to take her

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to Madame Viro's, with those dreadful clothes of hers, and her accent. Oh, Viro will never have an atom of respect for me again."

Sara, too done up to show fight, had sunk exhaustedly upon a hall-chair.

"I'm dead beat," she murmured — "I'm clean dead beat."

Chapter V

SARA, steadfastly refusing lunch, painfully climbed upstairs to her bedroom, where Mullins was seated at one of the windows, gloating over a penny novelette.

"Well," observed the handmaiden dryly, as her mistress dropped into a chair, "you do look pretty well played out, in spite of your fine clothes."

"I believe you," gasped Sara. "Mullins, for pity's sake undo my stays, or die I must. But first unlace them vipers of shoes, which is gnawin' the vitals of my toes off."

Mullins knelt down and removed the shoes, which she held up for inspection with a sniff of contempt.

"Well, I thought you'd a' had more sense than let yourself in for such tomfoolness. Why, if they 'aven't bust already!"

"Undo my stays, or I'll bust too," moaned the unhappy Sara. "Oh Lor'! — do make 'aste."

"Now, don't you put on no airs because you've come into money," said Mullins coolly. "I'm bein' as quick as I can. Well — the extravagance of you — buyin' a fur cape like that! Why, it must 'ave cost pounds. Drat this gown! It don't seem to fasten nowhere."

"Under the arm," was the choked answer.

At last the gown was off, and the smart corset likewise; and Sara, with a sigh both deep and heavy, lay back in her chair and closed her eyes.

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"Oh, it's 'eavenly, bein' able to breathe and move my toes," she murmured. "I feel as if I could do a chop and a glass of stout now."

"Well, I'll go down and fetch a tray," said Mullins. "That footman — Graves he calls hisself — seems a decent kind of chap. He'll see to it for me. I've 'ad my dinner, or lunch, or whatever they call it in these parts."

She bustled away, and presently returned with a tray, well laden with Mullins' idea of a hearty meal.

When Sara had done justice to this, she said:

"After you've taken the tray down, just bring up the parcels of my old things that I brought 'ome from that nest of wicked extravagance. Euphemia Mullins, if I was to tell you what I've spent this day, unbeknown, you'd tell me to my face I was a liar. That there cape now, what do you think it's a-goin' to cost? Just give a guess. But, there, you never could. Three 'undred and fifty pounds, or thereabouts."

"Lord bless us and save us!" ejaculated Miss Mullins, looking as impressed as even Sara could wish. "My goodness, Sara Grub! But you must be a rich woman."

"That's so," said Sara, with a curious kind of melancholy triumph in her voice, as she finished the bottle of stout. "It seems regular sinful, don't it? But Sallie — bless 'er! she's a sweet gal — she says I must dress up to my position."

"Well, you seem to be fairly on the way to it," returned Mullins, more respectfully than usual.

For nothing had brought home to her the wonderful change in Sara's circumstances so much as the purchase of this costly fur.

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She went out of the room with the tray, and returned with a flat cardboard box and a bonnet-box.

"Let's go over 'em carefully," said Sara, "to make certain none of them's been kep'."

Each article — even the shabby old brown corset — was carefully wrapped in silk paper. The dreadful old elastic-sided boots were in a parcel by themselves.

"Put them all carefully away," said Sara, when she had made sure that nothing was missing. "I may give 'em to you one of these days. But on goes my old stays and my easy shoes, though the skies fall."

Mullins obeyed. Then she said:

"And what about that there new bonnet? Are you goin' to keep that on? I will say," she added critically, "that it looks kind of stylish; and that gown's a lovely stuff, though black; and the petticoat just what I'd wish to wear myself."

"I must 'ave somethin' on my 'ead," said Sara, watching Mullins as she folded up the spotted veil. "I don't know but what a nice dressy cap would suit me. But I'll keep on this bonnet to-day — yes, and go down to dinner in it, if only to spite that cousin of mine — for cousin she is, with her 'Mrs. Grub' 'ere and 'Mrs. Grub' there."

Meanwhile Sallie was (to borrow an expression of Terence's) "getting it hot" from her stepmother.

"What on earth possessed you to take her to Madame Viro's?" she said angrily, when the servants had left the room. "It is too provoking. Really, you seem to go out of your way to annoy me."

"But, my dear mother, you told me to get her

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properly rigged out, as you hadn't the time; so, of course, I took her to old Viro. Where did you mean me to take her?"

"Oh, I thought of Miss Wantle. She would have done quite well enough in the meantime; but to take her to Viro while she is the appalling object she is —"

"You owe Viro a lot of money, don't you?" said Sallie, as she gave Winkle a well-buttered biscuit.

"Well, suppose I do," was the fretful answer.

"Only that if Viro has the prospect of bleeding a new and wealthy customer through your introduction, she will probably not worry about your bill for a bit longer. I told her Sara was rich, and would most likely want to pay ready money —"

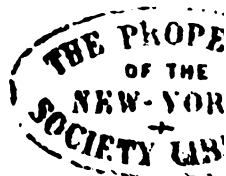
"And did you tell her — but I suppose you did — that she was a relative?"

"Yes. I said she was a second cousin."

"Of course, I might have known," groaned her stepmother. "What on earth will Viro think? I shouldn't so much mind the creature being shabby and queer-looking if it weren't for her appalling voice and accent. Nothing could shape her into the faintest semblance of a lady — *nothing*."

"My dear stepmother," said Sallie coldly (she always addressed Mrs. Hamersley as "stepmother" when the latter's idiosyncrasies particularly jarred upon her), "I am not at all sure that Sara is not in some things quite as much, if not more, a lady than most of us. As for Madame Viro, let her think what she likes."

Here Barker entered, bearing upon a salver a letter, which he handed to his mistress.



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"Another bill!" said the latter fretfully, as the man left the room. "I've a good mind to throw it into the fire without opening it."

However, upon second thoughts she did open it; and as she glanced at its contents she uttered an exclamation of pleased surprise.

Sallie looked up.

"Any special news?" she said.

"Really, this is very satisfactory," answered Mrs. Hamersley, without noticing Sallie's question. "Somehow I had no idea that Mrs. Grub's allowance to us was to be paid quarterly in advance. It appears that it is, however. This is from Mr. Lirrip. He encloses a cheque for a hundred and seventy-five pounds."

"Good!" replied Sallie, removing Winkle from her lap, and presenting him with a final biscuit. "I really don't see what all the grumbling anent poor old Sara is about. We are likely to be a good deal more comfortable with her than without her."

"If she were only a lady," began Mrs. Hamersley. "If one could comfortably introduce her to one's friends."

"I shan't feel the slightest discomfort in introducing her to any of my friends," answered Sallie. "At first, I admit, the prospect of having her did seem rather awful; but I really think I shall like her. She is quite original, and, I'm sure, awfully good-hearted."

"But if she only wouldn't talk about her dreadful shop and the shops of her friends! I thought I should have died of shame last night when she reminded Professor Mangell that he had been a customer of hers."

THE OTHER SARA

"Pooh! Old Mangell wouldn't care if she'd been a crossing-sweeper; and neither should I."

"Really, Sallie, I hope you are not going to develop into a socialist."

"Not at all. I haven't the slightest sympathy with any socialists I have ever seen or heard of; only I like people for what they are, and for the kind of hearts they have, not for the way they chance to speak, nor for having a row of titled ancestors."

"Oh, I've no patience with you when you talk about hearts. Hearts are as extinct as the dodo. You'd speak very differently if this old Grub were a poor relation that had been dumped down on us. Really, Sallie, though you do set up for being independent and unconventional, you can see which side your bread is buttered on as well as any of us. I dare say you and Evan can make a very good use of Mrs. Grub and her money. Thank goodness, I am above such mercenary considerations."

Sallie's eyes flashed; but she resolutely closed her lips, lest she should say too much; and, whistling to Winkle, she went up to the drawing-room. Mrs. Hamersley followed her, and the two women sat in silence, absorbed in their respective magazines, until Terence, gay and brisk as usual, made his appearance. It was Mrs. Hamersley's "at home" day, by the way.

"What ho! Whence this glumness?" he said gaily, when he had greeted his kinswomen, and pulled Winkle's ears. "Not been having a fresh set-to, I hope?"

Before either could answer the door opened, and Sara appeared — Sara in comfortable carpet-slippers, their air of blatant ease curiously contradicted by

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Madame Viro's bonnet and gown. The latter gaped considerably as far as the bodice was concerned; but two imitation lace handkerchiefs pinned across it haphazard partly supplied deficiencies. The gown had short elbow-sleeves, from which Sara's stout red arms emerged in odd contrast to the dainty stuff above them. Mrs. Hamersley, somewhat mollified by the receipt of the quarterly cheque, said almost amiably:

"I hope you feel better, Mrs. Grub. I'm afraid you had a tiring morning."

"Thank you kindly, cousin. I've 'ad a rest and a meal, and feel all the better. But what I've suffered this day I shan't forget in a 'urry. What with stays and shoes, I've, in a way of speakin', suffered the tortures of the lost; but never again, s'elp me — never again!"

Mrs. Hamersley's eyes were riveted on the appalling carpet-slippers, which stuck out from Madam Viro's costly creation of filmy chiffon. She felt as though she could cheerfully have shaken the complacent little roly-poly of a woman, who seemed so irritably unconscious of wrong-doing. Just then Barker announced:

"Lady Ellen Dunsettle."

Mrs. Hamersley greeted the new-comer with effusion.

"So pleased to see you, dear Lady Ellen!" she said. "So good of you to come! How is your son?"

"Thanks, he is fairly well," said Lady Ellen in a coolly civil tone. Then, turning to Sallie, she said:

"I want you to come on Saturday and stay over Sunday with me, my dear. I have a nephew coming up from Lincolnshire. He is a rabid socialist, and he and James are, of course, absolutely opposed at every

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point. So I want you to come to sing to James and keep him in a good humour."

"Am I to sing to him all the time from Saturday to Monday?" asked Sallie, laughing, as the visitor kissed her affectionately.

"Saucy child!" she said. "You know James would not object if you sang to him all his life. How do you do, Terence?" she added. "Your father dined with me yesterday. How young he looks! He might almost be your brother."

"Yes, he's a jolly old sort, the governor," acquiesced Terence heartily. "I'm rather proud of the old boy myself."

Lady Ellen Dunsettle was a tall, sweet-looking woman, with small, regular features, piercing black eyes, and a quantity of silvery hair. She was about sixty, but looked rather older.

She was rather an exclusive person, and rarely called upon Mrs. Hamersley. When she did, her visits — to speak paradoxically — were usually intended for Sallie.

As Mrs. Hamersley made no movement to introduce Sara, Sallie said:

"Lady Ellen, may I introduce our cousin, Mrs. Grub? She has just come to make her home with us, and we hope all our friends may be hers, too."

"How do you do, my lady?" said Sara, holding out her hand. "I hope I see you well."

"How do you do?" replied Lady Ellen, as she returned the handshake, and surveyed the new product with courteous curiosity. "I hope you will like London."

"Lor', my lady, I know London well enough,

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though I'm a bit strange in the West End of it; but as for the East — well, I could tramp it blindfold, as the sayin' is; and a queer place it is, too, full of disease and poverty, and worse. But there, as Scriptur' tells us, where mankind is, there will the vultures be gathered together."

Lady Ellen would hardly have been human if her eyes had not strayed to Sara's enormous carpet-slippers, which formed such a startling contrast to the dainty and unmistakably French gown above them.

"I do 'ope as 'ow you'll excuse my shoes, my lady," said Sara, following the direction of the visitor's gaze; "but against my own will and judgment I was fool enough to get a pair of 'igh-'eeled, fashionable shoes, about three sizes too small for me, which the agony I went through was unmentionable, and my feet ache cruel, even now."

"I can sympathize with you," said Lady Ellen. "I don't think I ever felt quite so miserable in all my life as one time when I went to a picnic in a pair of shoes a size too small for me. I could have cried with pain."

Mrs. Hamersley was crimson with annoyance.

"Of course, you are going to the Beauchamps' fancy ball next Monday," she said, addressing her visitor in the slightly affected tone she always used when speaking to people whom she considered of social importance.

"No; I never go to balls now," the other answered, an iced sweetness in her tone which had not been noticeable when she addressed Sallie nor Terence, nor even Sara.

"But your son — he is going, of course?"

THE OTHER SARA

"Oh no; my son would be quite out of place at a fancy ball," was the quiet answer. "Are you going, Sallie?"

"Yes. Terence and I are going as the 'Babes in the Wood,'" Sallie answered; "and mother is going as 'Mary Queen of Scots.'"

"Well, that's a queer character to choose, cousin," said Sara, with round eyes. "Why, she was a beautiful young woman, from all accounts; and what character she 'ad she lost when she went to Scotland. I read a 'eap about 'er in a book I found in my six-penny box; and there seemed to be fine goin's on whenever she was anywhere about. To my thinkin' she warn't no better nor —"

Here Barker and Graves entered with tea, to Mrs. Hamersley's relief.

While Sara drank her tea and munched her cake, she was mentally making notes of Lady Ellen's dress and her deportment generally.

"She's a real toff," she reflected; "and none of your upstarts, as 'as married a bit above them; and dressed just as quiet as quiet. But quite the lydy."

Suddenly Mrs. Hamersley addressed her in a tone of subdued irritation.

"Mrs. Grub, would you oblige me by taking another chair?" she said. "I did not notice until now, but the one you are sitting upon is covered with very old Turkish embroidery."

Sara rose at once.

"Oh, I don't want to sit on no Turkish embroidery," she said good-naturedly; "but if the chair ain't for sittin' on, why don't you have it under a glass case, or 'ung up agin the wall; or why not 'ave a label on it

...IN OLD FURNITURE
Ellen, who found Sara both origin

"Lor', my lady, until a few day
tique shop in War Lane, Limeho
toff 'ave I sold pounds' worth to; ti
sold 'eaps of things besides antiques;
folks don't want to buy no old thing
old things and buys new gimcracky
system, which is pure ruin to many.'

Here Mrs. Hamersley put in, with

"It was a hobby of my cousin's
tablishment she speaks of. I never
why. If I had her wealth, I should

"Goodness gracious me, cousin! I
talkin' abaht?" exclaimed Sara, with
well you know I had no more idea
unborn that I was a 'eiress and you
other day. As for 'obbies — there
me 'avin' my old shop, no more th
keepin' myself out of the workus —
usual to all."

"I am much interested in old furni
Ellen, crossing the room to take a cl
But before sitting down, she said sv
Mrs. Hamersley

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Turkey by a very dear old friend. I prize it very highly."

"A Turkish female may have worked the embroidery," said Sara; "and a queer lot they are, from all accounts, shut up in harrums, for all the world like hens in a coop, for I've seen pictures with nex' to nothin' on — but still, that may be owin' to the climate. Well, as I was sayin', a Turkish female may 'ave worked the embroidery, but if that there chair isn't the 'andiwork of a English carpenter — and a third-rate carpenter at that — why, I'll eat my shoes."

"Our Cousin Sara is an awful dab on antiques," observed Terence. "She's found out already that ever so many of Aunt Selina's household gods are not what they seem."

"I have some really curious old things," said Lady Ellen; "and my son has picked up some bits of furniture and bric-à-brac here and there. You must come one day, when you have time, Mrs. Grub, and give him your opinion of them."

"I fear my cousin's engagements are at present too numerous to admit of her making any more in the meantime," put in Mrs. Hamersley hurriedly.

"Lor', cousin, you must be dreamin'!" said Sara, looking at the speaker in amazement; "for well you know I've nothing earthly to do but go to that Madame What's-'er-nime on Thursday. Indeed, my lady, I'll come and see you with pleasure; and if your son wants any tips abaht queerios, he might go further and fare worse than get 'em from Sara Grub. But maybe I'd better wait till I get all my new clothes and my carriage and pair. I'd do you more credit like, drivin' up to the door, like your other visitors."

all over her honest face. "And that affronts you, just tell me, I been in the way of visitin' 'ouse; you can see for yourself. I'm deceased publican, who 'asn't s life excep' from the papers, and depend on."

When the visitor had gone, Mr a tone of intense annoyance:

"Really, Mrs. Grub, you seem forcing your low origin upon all m not try to forget the shop in L hardly be as interesting to other and it is very mortifying for me."

"Oh, I say, Aunt Selina, do gi postulated Terence, with an unw good-looking young face.

Sara's fresh colour had deepene

"My low origin!" she repeate d'ye mean? Let me remind you th late 'usband's fam'ly, and you on marriage — as is plain to be seen and your way of treatin' those as where they certin-

of forgettin' it. And if your friends don't like it, and don't like me, they can lump it. Toffs ain't nothin' to me. I've done without 'em all these years, and I ain't goin' to worry abaht 'em now. But if I takes a fancy to any of 'em, and if they arks me, as one lydy to another, to go and see 'em, like that real lydy as 'as just lef' the room, why, go I shall, and no 'with your leave' or 'by your leave' abaht it."

Terence applauded soundlessly, and danced a noiseless *pas de seul* well out of his aunt's view.

"Lady Ellen will certainly not expect to see you," said Mrs. Hamersley coldly. "She only asked you as a matter of form, out of respect for me."

"Oh no, mother. Lady Ellen meant it," said Sallie. "She is not the sort of woman to ask anyone to her house unless she really wants them to go."

"Mrs. Grub can please herself, of course," said Mrs. Hamersley, with an acidulated smile; "but *I* shall certainly not accompany her."

"Well, that won't put me out," answered Sara dryly. "Come to that, I don't seem to remember 'earin' 'er arsk you."

Here several visitors were announced; and presently Sara said in an undertone to Sallie:

"Is this your stepmar's 'at home' day, my dear?"

"Yes — at least, she always stays at home every eighth Wednesday."

"Was that why Lady Ellen What's-'er-nime came?" inquired Sara, tucking her carpet-slippers well under her skirt.

"Oh no; she came by chance. She never remembers anyone's 'at-home' days."

"Ain't she got one, then?"

As Sara spoke, she patted Sallie's head
gently.

"Oh, I don't know yet when I shall be married,"
was the cheerful answer. "We Evan has a better post than he has."

"Now look 'ere, my pretty. I am worth a thousand
in wealth. What would a thousand pounds
come be to me? Say the word, and I will
for that Lirrip to-morrow and fix
thousand a year to your name for life."

Sallie laughed. But her voice was low, and
there was a touched look in her eyes.

"You dear Cousin Sara, that is very kind of you.
Why, Evan would simply refuse to take it.
I had a thousand a year. His private
arms directly at the thought of it, and
whose income was nearly five times as much."

"Is that so?" said Sara, looking at her
very different down our way. Gals
own ain't plentiful abaht Limehouse, but
do 'appen, they could 'ave their pick of
single men, and chance it."

"Oh yes, there are a few."

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isn't like that," said Mr. Rollestone's sweetheart proudly.

"Now, I don't know but what I admire his sperrit," said Sara in a thoughtful voice. "Well, then, how would it do," she added, "if I was to make over the thousand a year to 'im? Then there couldn't be no doubt of who 'ad it and who 'adn't?"

"Dear, kind Sara," Sallie answered, shaking her head, "that would never do, either. Evan wouldn't take it. Please don't speak of it to him. But thank you ever so much."

"But why carn't I, in the nime of goodness?" exclaimed Sara in a hurt voice. "Don't 'e like me? I 'ave noticed he 'asn't taken much notice of me, excep' talkin' a few words at dinner larst night — through me, p'raps, not suitin' 'is taste, no doubt, though a 'andsome gal in my time. But 'e carn't 'ave took such a distaste as to refuse a income given on his sweetheart's account."

"Oh no," answered Sallie. "He likes you, because he told me so; and if you had been quite poor, he would very likely have been devotedly attentive to you. But he is odd in some things, and he never makes much fuss with rich or influential people. Please don't you worry about us, Cousin Sara. Something will turn up by-and-by. As for me, if I like people, I show it, and can't help it, whether they are rich or poor, good or bad, well-born or not; and if I dislike people, I can't help showing it, too, though they might be angels from heaven, or multi-millionaires, or kings and queens. But there's mother raising her eyebrows, and turning her head towards Mrs. Selby. That

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means that I am to go and talk to Mrs. Selby. I'll send Terence to talk to you."

"Lor', I don't want nobody to talk to me, my lamb. I likes to look at the folks streamin' in; and there ain't one of them as can 'old a candle to that Lady Ellen, or whatever you call her, as came fust. She's a tip-topper, I will say. My! who is that there young man with hair like a female's?"

"Ah! here's Terence," said Sallie. "Terence, you will talk to Cousin Sara, and tell her who all the people are?"

"Of course I will," answered Terence, as he seated himself in the seat just vacated by Sallie. "I've been dying to talk to her all the afternoon."

"Get along with you," chuckled Sara, "talkin' such nonsense! But who, for goodness, is that objec'?"

"Oh, that — that's Sheridan Faulds," said Terence in a disparaging voice. "He composes rotten pieces of poetry, and recites them at tea-parties and evening functions."

"He don't look quite right in 'is 'ead," remarked Sara. "Wotever does he wear a red-and-white checked weskit for? And why is his hair long and curly, for all the world like a gal's?"

"He thinks that's toney," answered Terence gravely. "He goes to nineteen tea-parties every week, I believe."

"I thought he looked a fool," said Sara, with a scornful smile. "I wonder if he feels a bit shy, bein' the only man in the room — excep' you, of course, Mr. Agnew."

"Oh, he's accustomed to it," returned Terence — "in fact, I believe he prefers it. As for being shy, I

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don't think fellows like him know what it means. But, you know, Cousin Sara, you mustn't call me Mr. Agnew. If I call you Sara, you must call me Terence."

"All right, my dear lad. I ain't got no objection. But how was I to know you wasn't like your aunt? I s'pose she'd 'ave a fit right off if I called 'er Seliner. And she's mighty perticular in allus alludin' to me as Mrs. Grub. I'm sorry to say it of your aunt, but in my opinion she ain't no class. If she'd been dumped down on me in War Lane, I'd 'ave treated 'er very different. No lydy ought to mike folks feel uncomfortable. Why, the very Queen 'erself — Gawd bless 'er! — when she went to visit one of the horspitals, jest sat and talked to the poor souls as if she was nothin' but a woman like themselves; for one of 'em told me, settin' in a chair in my shop in War Lane. Lor', I think I see your aunt sailin' down War Lane. Her skirts would be 'alf-mast 'igh, you bet, and her nose curled up as far as she could get it; for I won't deny that Limehouse ain't all it might be in the way of smells, though it's home-like, I will say, and folks are very pally. But, I say, ain't Sallie's young man comin'?" she added.

"Not he. He wouldn't put in an appearance at one of Aunt Selina's 'at homes' for love or money. He'll be in the Glory Hole, waiting for Sallie. Watch her for a bit, and you'll see her slide out of the room, when my good step-aunt isn't looking."

"Bless their 'earts!" returned Sara, with a sigh. "It seems a cruel pity nothin' can't be arranged for their marriage."

"Yes. Evan's a good old sort," said Terence. "But it's an awful pity he came a cropper over that

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mine in Bolivia. However, I dare say he'll get his head above water after a bit. My gov. wanted to give him a lift; but he's so beastly proud. Wants to do everything off his own bat. You follow?"

"I see what you mean," replied Sara thoughtfully. "I've just been hintin' to Sallie that I might let 'em have a thousand a year. But she says neither of 'em could take it, owin' to proper pride, or something like that. It seems kind of queer to me. But I dessay she knows best."

"Well, you see, one doesn't do these things," said Terence frankly. "It's just as if someone came up to you, if you were hard up, and offered you a quid to buy fal-lals. You might want the fal-lals, but you wouldn't want to be indebted to strangers for them."

"But I'm one of the fam'ly," remonstrated Sara.

"Ah, yes; but Evan isn't, as yet, you see. I can gather his point of view, dear old chap! But still, it's most awfully decent of you, Cousin Sara, to think of helping them. You're a real good sort; and I'll back you against Aunt Selina any day."

"Look 'ere, Terence," said Sara, after a silence. "I've kind of took to you, and I'd like to arsk you advice."

"All right. I'm your man," was the prompt answer.

"Well, you see, it's like this," continued Sara slowly. "My lawyer told me I could quite easily keep a carriage and pair."

"So you could, on ten thousand a year. Rather!"

"Well, I've been thinkin' whether a nice brougham, with one decent 'oss and a respectable coachman, with no footman dangle around, wouldn't be more suitable.

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to a party as, not so much longer than a couple of days ago, 'ad a shop in War Lane. Now, what do you think — honest?"

"Well," answered Terence, lowering his voice, "of course, it's a matter of opinion. But I don't mind warning you that if you set up a carriage and pair and a footman, you'll find yourself lending Aunt Selina the show seven days out of the week, and as time goes on you'll find your footman annexed as one of Aunt Selina's household."

"If I didn't think it!" said Sara. "Well, that settles it. A brougham 'll do for me, then, and I'll see that my coachman has a lodgin' for 'imself, independent of 397, Bryanston Square. The only thing is," she added regretfully, "I 'ad set my 'eart on goin' to that Lady Ellen's in a swell turn-out like 'er own. Not that I ever saw it. But I suppose she 'as 'er carriage and pair, like other toffs."

Terence laughed.

"There you're wrong," he answered. "The Dun-settles have a pedigree as long as your arm; but they're not specially well off. And as for carriages and pairs, why, they job a one-horse brougham for the season, just as Aunt Selina does."

"Lor'!" ejaculated Sara.

About ten days later a very pretty girl was seated in a smartly-appointed motor-car on a fast-trotting grey cob, on the way to the station.

Mullins was seated beside her, and he was saying:

"Well, I will say that 'oss does a good turn-out. No pair could have passed about a dozen 'oss-busses."

"Yes, it's a nice turn-out," said Sara.

"But I wonder you didn't 'ave a look at the upsides when you were at it — one of them upsides they call them, don't they? 'ave kep' bowin' from side to side, just like the Princess of Wales. My gran 'ave knocked 'em in War Lane. They 'ave upsides with the real quality, and cuttin' a dash."

"Well, I don't know so much about that," Sara thoughtfully. "It seems to me that you don't mind about cuttin' a dash. Kipper is different. But the slap-up toffs are quiet-like. Look at that Lady Ellen — and he was speakin' gospel truth that 'e met 'er in a common bus one time. Think of that? She'd lent 'er car."

... ..

THE OTHER SARA

somever, busses come cheaper nor cabs; and Terence says she ain't none too well off. Though it does seem kinder rum to think of a earl's daughter ridin' 'in a bus, alongside all sorts. For Mrs. Hamersley told me 'erself as how Lady Ellen's father was the Earl of Tarlton. But Sallie says it ain't nothin' uncommon — them kind of folk ridin' in busses, I mean — yes, and sometimes on the front seat on top, talkin' as fluent and affable as you please to the driver. Arter all, I s'pose they don't care what folks think. They're just *them*, and nothink can't make them anythink else."

"Well, anyhow, no toff of 'em all could beat that fur of yourn," said Mullins. "But, bless you, they won't know in War Lane but what you got it a bargain off some second-'and stall of a Sat'dy night."

"They'll know, 'cos I'll tell 'em," answered Sara, with an emphatic nod. "Lor', Mullins, we're gettin' near 'ome. Blest if I don't feel all of a tremble."

"We're goin' to 'ave our tea at the Skinners', ain't we?" said Mullins, hanging out of the window to shout to the coachman to turn to the right.

"That's so," replied Sara. "But I'm goin' to the shop fust of all to see how that Widow Claptry is gettin' on; and, moreover, I 'ave a kind of longin' to see the old place. It seems ages since I sor it."

Widow Claptry stood knee-deep in "queerios," and curtsied without ceasing as Sara and Mullins alighted.

"Now, you — I forget your nime," said Sara, addressing her coachman — "I dessay you'd like to go and 'ave 'alf a pint; so just cut round to the Dolphin, and 'ave what you fancy out of this" — handing him half a crown — "and come back in a quarter of an hour. What is your name, by the way?"

...jensen, and not as
come into money unexpected."

Thomas pocketed the half-crown
and drove off, amid the cheers of
muffins of all ages, who had gathered
ment.

At first Sara, in her Viro garb,
by her old-time associates; but as
marks of her face and speech dawned
all pressed forward to shake her hand.

"Lor' bless us and save us, Sara
'owler!" said a tall, handsome man
sarcastic smile, as he raised a brimless

"Good-day to you, Jim Bassett
shortly. "I 'ope you've got some
put a bit o' food inside your wife and

"No, that he 'asn't," said Widow
"and tried his level to make me buy
old mangle, which well I know is more
clothin' to all 'is fam'ly. But, remember
words, Mrs. Grub, I said 'No,' and
again."

As she spoke she led the way to the
parlour," and for a time the crowd
was shut out.

THE OTHER SARA

here old chest of drawers for a bit or two of lace to give to my second cousin Sallie. She sets a heap of store on dirty bits o' lace — the Lord above knows why. But if she likes 'em, there ain't no reason why she shouldn't 'ave 'em."

As she spoke she whipped up her skirt, and produced from a hanging pocket a heavy bunch of keys, with one of which she opened the bottom drawer of a dusty, rickety piece of eighteenth-century furniture in a corner of the room.

"There!" she muttered, as she drew out a grimy but delicately designed piece of lace from a broken cardboard box, "if that measly piece in old Viro's window is worth pounds, I'll lay that this is worth as many guineas."

After a brief scrutiny of the premises generally, she said:

"Well, we'll all go round to Skinners' to tea. Come along, Mrs. Claptry. We'll give Park's girl a shilling to look after the plice till you come back."

"Lor', I ain't fit to go in that there kerridge," murmured Widow Claptry, hanging back.

"Get along! You shall ride in a kerridge for once in your life, if you never do again."

"Well, well, Mrs. Grub, you allus was masterful," murmured the widow, creeping into the brougham, and shrinking into as small a space as was possible.

Again the crowd on the pavement cheered, as Sara and her satellites drove off in triumph to the abode of the Skinners, which was only two streets away.

Bob Basset opened the carriage-door for them, and helped Sara to alight, he having been carefully instructed to do so by his mother.

... who were absolutely contented
station in life. Ned Skinner, I
them. He was a plumber, and w
for five and a half days a week.
and conscientiously, and therefor
employment. His earnings were
were sufficient to keep himself an
comfortable. His mother was a t
the house, as Sara had often decl
from top to bottom." It was a v
only two stories, and the Skinner
consisting of two rooms, to a Scot
Fergus and his lame little daught
was a type-setter in a small printin
Street. His wages were small, but
own and his daughter's wants; and
had no fault to find with the stati
which it had pleased his God to call
household were teetotallers; and wi
saved were able to afford many li
luxuries which were unattainable to
ing neighbours.

Every Saturday afternoon the S
party, to which it was consid

THE OTHER SARA

Sara and Mullins were about to grace the Skinners' weekly tea-party, for which, from the first inauguration of these festivities, they had had a standing invitation.

Mrs. Bassett was among the guests, with her son Bob and her daughter Irene. The latter was a young person of practical mind, and, like her mother, was sternly opposed to her father's socialistic views. Jim Bassett was there also — on sufferance, as it were, and on his wife's account. John Fergus and his lame daughter were there, of course, being looked upon by the Skinners as members of the family. The remaining guest was a consumptive-looking young woman — Ada Hobart by name — who proudly called herself a suffragette, and had just "done time" for being violent and disorderly on the doorsteps of Cabinet Ministers, obstructing the police in the performance of their duties, and otherwise creating a disturbance.

Sara's entrance was accompanied — figuratively, of course — by a flourish of trumpets. Mrs. Skinner tried to repress her feeling of triumphant pride at having a "kerridge" waiting at her door; and Ned was honestly gratified, too. Mullins moved among her former associates with an air of chastened condescension. But Sara, as her old friends noted with surprise and satisfaction, was the Sara of old. There was no evidence of "side," or "frills," or putting on of "airs." True, she was dressed, as Eliza Bassett said in an awe-stricken whisper to Mrs. Skinner, "as a reg'lar toff. And her clothes and her furs a picture to behold, and made one hold one's breath. But it was Sara, right enough. And with a smile and a handshake for all, just as if she'd driven down in a

hreepenny bus instead of in her own kerridge and with her own coachman sitting like a graven image in the box."

Even Jim Bassett, rabid socialist though he was, looked upon her not unkindly as they sat at the festive board, and passed her the bread-and-butter sandwiches with unwonted and awkward civility.

"Well, Jim," said Sara, as she unfastened her sable cape, and drew off her white gloves, "I am surprised to see you so affable-like. I'm sure I thought nothin' but what you'd 'ave 'ad me stoned out of War Lane or bein' a moneyed bloater, or a bloated aristocracy, or whatever you calls us in your 'Yde Park yel-n's.'"

"I ain't bein' affable," said Jim gruffly. "I'm only keepin' quiet till I see what's your point of view, in manner of speakin'. I came 'ere hopin' to get a few 'ints as to the ways of those in the upper suckles. 'or I suppose that's where you move now, ain't it?"

"Earl's daughters," said Mullins, with her utterance slightly impeded by bloater-paste, "barrynits, cutlers, and footmen. O Lor'!"

"And money flowin' like water, I dessay," put in Jim Basset aggressively; "and folks in 'igh plices usin' themselves with meat and drink; and never thought to them as is their brothers and sisters in verythink but blood—starvin' or wuss. A cryin' hime, I calls it. There didn't ought to be no money at all, nor no wages. Everythink ought to be managed and organized by the State, sime as the Post-Office. Clothes and food and all necessities should be distributed where they were needed. There 'ud be a common stock of everythink, and no one would want,

THE OTHER SARA

and no one would have more than their neighbours. Everythink would be free — amusements, victuals, lodgin', and travelling expenses, and all. I'd be as good as the Prime Minister, and 'e wouldn't be a blooming straw better'n me."

"Jim Bassett, you're talkin' a lot of tomfool rubbish," said Ned Skinner good-naturedly. "You've got 'old of some 'igh-falutin' ideas spouted from a platform by some radical Member of Parliament, either just before or just after 'is election, and you've got 'em all topsy-turvy. So let's chuck it, and 'ave our tea in peace and quietness."

"Ye'll no regenerate the wurruld by turnin' the community into a wheen torpid buddies willin' to reduce the race of life into a limited liability," said John Fergus, in his strong Northern accent. "It's written that there must aye be hewers o' wood an' drawers o' water; and if things are no as we'd like them, we'll no better them by waitin' till we're all made equal by Act o' Parliament. There's aye room at the top, and if we dinna get there in our lifetime, it'll no be against us if our deen' breath finds us gaspin' to get there. But him that bids for a silk goon aye gets a sleeve o't. And he that's content to sit at the foot o' the ladder until someone makes a law to shove him to the top is verra likely to stop whaur he is for the rest of his days. But every man maun keep to his ain station, and do his level best there, until it pleases his God to say to him to 'come up higher.'"

"Right for you, John Fergus," said Sara heartily. "I 'aven't no patience with socialistic rubbidge. Not but what I'd be ready an' willin' to share my last crust

just come into ten thousand and expected to 'ave any ideas as to sl

"Nor why should she?" said himself liberally to watercress. good. I sor the other day in sor if all the money in the United equally among all the inhabitants would 'ave abaht one hundred and thirteen shillings and nine-pence.

"Lor'!" exclaimed Eliza Bassett put that away in drinks in abaht 'e was put to it."

"Shut yer 'ead!" retorted her "Who are ye talkin' abaht?"

"I'm talkin' abaht you," flashed "and if —"

"Now, now," put in Sara. "I Eliza and James Bassett; and it treat to me to 'ear you goin' at it, like a bloomin' Punch and Judy in us a rest, and let's 'ave our teas says."

"Deed aye," assented Fergus. ment bein' present at marriage ceremony."

THE OTHER SARA

word, both before folks' faces and behind their backs," said Sara, "so I can feel, in a way, for them as must 'ave' em, only drawin' the line at squabblin' in other people's 'ouses. But 'give and take' is a good motter in wedlock, as the Scriptur' specially hints to us. Though I will say, Eliza Bassett, that your Jim is tryin' above ordinary, and so I suppose is intended from above so to be, or wouldn't be permitted."

"To my mind women are great fools to get married, and put themselves in any man's power," said Ada Hobart. "Nowadays a woman has her career to think of. Our position isn't what it was in our grandmothers' time, or even our mothers'. We're going to be the equals of men, and more. First, we'll get our vote, and then we'll be in Parliament, and then —"

"And then the Lord knows where you'll be next," said Skinner, with an easy laugh, as he cut liberal slices of cold ham. "What do you say, mother? 'Ave you any views on gettin' into Parliament?"

"Not I," answered his mother contentedly. "A nice jay I'd look and feel, settin' among the men, makin' laws. I don't say but what I might kind of 'int to the Prime Minister that when he was busy takin' away licences he might take away the grocers' as well as the publicans'."

"Let 'im take away what licences he bloomin' well pleases," growled Jim Bassett. "He won't keep me nor my pals from 'avin' our beer reglar and constant. If we can't get it one way, we'll git it in another."

"Beer's a sad waste of money," said Ada Hobart in a tone of decision. "And for the matter of that, so's all alcohol in any shape or form. I used to take

THE OTHER SARA

my 'alf-pint at dinner and 'alf-pint at supper, which is twopence a day. Now I saves that twopence a day, and it works out at three pounds odd in the year. So that three quid goes into the savin's bank instead of into my inside."

"Eh, but you're a thrifty lassie," said Fergus in a tone of measured approval. "I wonder at a lassie with as much sense talkin' havers about weemen's suffrage and the like, and rinnin' aboot in processions and a' that. It's no becomin', sich-like capers. It's no way for a young lass to carry on."

"We are the pioneers," said Miss Hobart, with an ineffable air. "We are paving the way for our more fortunate sisters, who will have as a birthright what we have fought and suffered and gone to prison for."

"Weel, weel," said John, shaking his head, "I wouldna like to see my wee Jessie at ony sic capers; though the Lord's put it pretty weel out o' the bairn's power, it's true," he added, with a sigh.

"I don't see no objections to women 'avin' votes," said Mrs. Skinner in her soft voice. "For those as has property or 'as to live alone and arrange their own business affairs, it seems only just. But I don't no more approve of a vote for every woman than I do of a vote for every man."

"No," put in Mullins grimly, "nor I don't approve of young women careerin' abaht the streets covered with mud like mad bullocks, with their 'air 'angin' over their shoulders, and their clothes 'alf tore off their backs on their way to the lock-up. Not for no sum on earth would I so demean myself. And it's all very well for parties to say they wouldn't get married if it was ever so, and wouldn't put themselves in

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no man's power. But if you arsk me, a decent man would think twice before he spoke of marriage to a young female who 'ad done time, like any common criminal."

"Oh, no," said Ada, who was accustomed to such speeches, "like uncommon criminals. We glories in it. It ain't no picnic, I can tell you. It's quite time some one spoke up for prison reform. But we'll 'ave our reward. Our statooes 'll be in Trafalgar Square as martyrs one of these days."

"Oh, go and play," interrupted Mullins rudely. "You're talkin' through your 'at, like all women if they mix themselves up in men's concerns. Why, it's not six months since you got taken on in Bimble's pickle-factory, and was as content as a cat with nine tails because you'd 'ad a promise of your screw bein' raised; and now you've chucked it all for this 'cause,' as you calls it. I ain't got no patience with sech goin's-on. There's a very sensible young man in our 'ouse in Bryanston Square, though he is a footman, and 'is name is Graves. And 'e says to me, 'e says, 'Miss Mullins, I admire your good sense in the views you 'old,' 'e says."

"There, Mullins, don't go 'urtin' Miss 'Obart's feelin's," put in Sara the peacemaker. "We all 'as our convictions, and some of us takes 'em more serious than others. If Ada 'Obart feels drawn to things that seems fool's play to you an' me, we ain't got no call to put 'er out of conceit with 'em. Live an' let live, say I. Lor', I once 'ad a lodger as ate snails stewed in milk for the good of 'is lungs — or, to speak properly, for 'is lung, for he 'ad only one, they said. It seemed a disgustin' form of diet to me, I will allow, but it

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THE OTHER SARA

warn't none o' my business. So I jest kep' a saucepan set apart and 'eld my tongue. And when he died 'e left me five quid for my kind attentions. It's true he he did owe me four pound fourteen for 'is rooms and that. But he meant well, and none can do more."

"You ain't told us nothin' of the way the toffs live," said Irene Bassett, a pert young person of ten, who had been quarrelling intermittently with her brother Bob during the above conversation. "What do they 'ave for dinner and supper? And 'ow do they look when they're dressed up for balls and parties?"

"Well, they do wear their clothin' low, I will say," admitted Sara slowly. "But there, I dessay it's just as you're brought up and accustomed. No doubt a North American Indian savage wouldn't know what you meant if you called 'im undecent. But their necks and arms and all that is a treat — kind of white-velvety-lookin', and as soft as soft. Now, if I was 'declothey,' as they call it — it's French for havin' very little on — why, I'd be a perfec' objec'; for my arms is as red as bricks, and a brown mark round my neck, owin' to my collar. You never did see such a gown as that French dressmaker sent 'ome — no body or sleeves to speak of. 'Owever, I bought a real Limerick lace shawl, and wear it I will and do."

"Three 'undred and fifty pounds for that fur thing she's wearing," put in Mullins casually. "Five guineas for the bonnet. She's got a 'eap more bonnets, and dresses, and everythink else by dozens."

"It seems a wicked waste," put in the suffragette. "No wonder that in past generations men looked upon us as dolls and playthings to hang fine clothes and trinkets on. When all's said and done, we can none

THE OTHER SARA

of us wear more than one bonnet or dress at a time."

"It's a blarsted shime!" exclaimed Jim Bassett fiercely, bringing his fist down on the table with a bang that made the cups dance — "it's a low, blarsted shime, for a woman as is old enough to know better, to set there with enough on 'er back and 'ead to feed 'undreds of 'ungry children."

"Less of it, please, Bassett," said Skinner quietly. "This is my 'ouse, you'll remember, not yourn; and I won't 'ave friends insulted at my table — by socialists or no socialists."

"Oh, let 'im jaw," said Sara good-humouredly. "If it amuses 'im, it don't do me no 'arm. I ain't goin' to wear less clothes to please 'im nor any man."

"I'm surprised to see you don't wear no jewellery, Mrs. Grub," said Miss Hobart. "I think if I 'ad your wealth I would 'ave a ring or two, anyway."

"Well, that's accordin' to taste," answered Sara. "As far as I've seen, toffs wear less jewellery than you might suppose — real toffs, I mean. Of course, when they goes out of evenin's, they're blazin', lots of 'em. But what looks all right on them would look very different on me. Red arms don't show off bracelets, nor stumpy fingers don't show off rings. I wears my weddin'-ring, as, bein' a respectable married widow, is only my bounden duty to do. And I wears a brooch to fasten my things at the neck. It's true I could afford to sparkle all over, if I was led that way. But I've the feelin' that it wouldn't be becomin' nor suitable."

"But tell us about your new relations," said Mrs. Skinner. "Are they nicely spoken among them-

...they're givin'
they don't shout nor bawl lik
course, I've only had abaht ten c
kep' my eyes and ear open, and

"And your cousin, once remov
ersley — what kind of woman is
Skinner.

"Well, she ain't just a plaste
second cousin Seliner 'Amersley a

"By natur' she's kind of fretfu
and she ain't none too pleased t
should know as we're connect
daughter, Sallie, 'is as sweet a li
stepped; and 'er young man's all
a bit stand-offish — which I unde
bein' poor and proud. And there'
cousin of Sallie's — Terence 'is nar
lar caution, but a 'eart of gold, I
me Sara, as free as you please.
little imps — a gal and a boy. A
but what could you expect?"

"And there's allus 'eaps of styli
goin'," added Mullins, "which, of c
cheerful and lively. And Sara. if
with them —"

Why should prosperity be thrown at one, and stole from another? Why should a gulf be fixed between the rich and the poor? Why —”

“’Old on,” put in Ned Skinner dryly. “You ain’t in ’Yde Park, you know. Stow that rot till ye are.”

As Sara and her handmaiden drove home in the gathering dusk, Mullins said:

“Look ’ere, Sara, I didn’t want to show my ignorance afore the Skinners and their lot, but what *is* a socialist? Straight — I can’t make out.”

“Jim Bassett’s one,” replied Sara.

“Yes, I know. But what’s ’is gime?”

“Well,” said Sara, who was busy replacing her white gloves by a pair of darker hue, “as far as I can make out, what a socialist really wants is that ’e’s to be boarded and lodged and clothed and taken abaht and amused at the expense of the State, and not expected to do a ’and’s turn of work for it. Of course, I ain’t certain, but that’s ’ow it seems to me. And now I think of it, I read in a paper book I found in my sixpenny box that somebody ’ad said that socialism is the cry of adult babyhood for public nurses and public pap-bottles.”

“In fact, then a socialist is someone as wants to ’ave nothin’ to do, and plenty of time to do it in, and plenty of money for doin’ it,” observed Mullins.

“That’s about it, Mullins. But, bless you, they ain’t right in their ’eads,” said Sara placidly.

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SARA, Sallie, Terence, and the
 ensconced in various parts of the
 blustering March afternoon. Sar
 was retrimming a lace blouse; the
 bling over "Patience;" and Tere
 on the hearthrug, was reading a
 from a popular fashion magazine.

"Well, now, this is 'omelike
 beaming upon Sallie and Terence
 me, if anyone 'ad told me that su
 livin' and occipation was to be met
 stylish toffs, I'd a' said, 'Garn!'"

"Bless you, Sara, we know n
 style," said Terence cheerfully; "I
 have, we shed when we enter the C

"I allus 'ad the idea," continued
 "that folk in the West End lived
 wind, in a way of speakin', jest hu
 place to be in time to be at another

"That's Aunt Selina's game," sa
 Sallie thinks it isn't good enough.
 she wouldn't meet old Evan at soci
 saves her frocks her at

THE OTHER SARA

lesson to me, in the matter of rushing from pillar to post in search of amusement. She's down with one of her bad nervous headaches to-day, and can hardly see out of her eyes, as nurse used to say. So she's had to give up a lunch-party, a bazaar, two afternoon squashes, a dinner-party, with a theatre afterwards, a supper, with bridge to follow, and one or two other odds and ends sandwiched in."

"Lord bless us and save us!" exclaimed Sara. "I wonder she 'as the 'ealth and strength. But there — seemingly she 'asn't."

"That's nothing to what she does in the season," yawned Terence. "Give you my word she can be in from three to four places at once."

"Get along with you!" said Sara, with her comfortable laugh. "And what about that Lady Ellen, Sallie, where you and me is goin' to-morrer. She don't rush round like that, does she, at 'er age?"

"Oh, no; she lives very quietly," answered Sallie. "She gives four lovely dinner-parties every season, though; and after the last one there is always a dance."

Presently Sara said, in a low voice:

"Look 'ere, Sallie. I'm kinder shaky about goin' to that there place to-morrer. I've the feelin' that I might say or do somethin' that might affront you. If it was your stepmar as was goin' with me I wouldn't care, but let her be affronted or not, as she liked; but as it's you, well —"

"Now, Sara, don't you worry. Just be your jolly old self, as you were when Lady Ellen was here."

"But if you think of anythink, you'll tell me?" said Sara wistfully. "Your stepmar was at me for sayin' 'your ladyship' and 'my lady'" she added, "which

... married a plain Mr., who
fusin' to me."

"Pooh! don't worry," said Te
Ellen's a good old sort, and she m
all right, or she wouldn't have be
can be the other thing, though. 1
she gave my beloved step-aunt abo
the other day. Dear old soul! I f

Here the door opened, and a nei
girl came in.

"Children," she said, in an u
voice, "the bell for the nursery t
Didn't you hear it?"

"All right; we're coming, Miss
Anne. "Just wait a minute."

"Well, my girl, and how are y
Sara, addressing the timid little nu
a hearty voice. "Why, if you don
as perished."

"I am a little cold," answered
slightly. "I forgot my purse whe
had to walk all the way to Mudie'
rained rather heavily."

"But what a little silly you --"

THE OTHER SARA

Terence, as Parker and Graves entered with the tea equipage. "Oh, never mind about the nursery tea. Let the cats have it."

"Yes," chorused the children; "let's have tea here. It's far jollier. Can't we, Sallie?"

"All right. I don't mind," laughed Sallie, who loved giving the children all they asked for, and was beloved in proportion.

"I suppose you are going to stay to tea, Terence?" she continued, as she laid aside her sewing.

"Of course I am, heartless girl!" was the indignant answer. "Have you forgotten that in little more than six months I shall be nothing but a sad, beautiful memory?"

"Whatever do you mean, Terence?" asked Sara.

"Why, hasn't Sallie told you? I'm booked as secretary to an old fossil in Buckinghamshire in the late autumn. So, naturally, I'm making hay while the sun shines."

"Well, there, we shall miss you, and that's the truth," affirmed Sara. "But six months is six months, and who knows what may 'appen before then?"

Then Sallie poured out tea, and they were all very merry.

Only Sara noticed that the young governess's eyelids were red, as though with much weeping.

Late that night a roly-poly dressing-gowned figure climbed the staircase to the attics, and knocked at Miss Cave's door.

"Come in," said a muffled voice.

And Sara went in.

The governess was sitting at a rickety little table,

THE OTHER SARA

reading a letter. Her hair was hanging over her face, and heavy tears matted her eyelashes.

"Now, now, my pretty," said Sara soothingly. "What's the trouble? You needn't fear tellin' old Sara; for many a tale of sorer I've 'eard, and not been able to 'elp. But who can tell? I may be able to do suthin' for you."

The girl shook her head.

"Oh, no; nobody can do anything," she said in a dull, hopeless voice, that made honest Sara's heart feel sore. "But it's very kind of you to care, Mrs. Grub. I'm sure I don't know why you should."

"My gal, I've 'ad trouble myself and to spare; and I allus said if I could 'elp anyone else in trouble I would, so 'elp me Gawd! So now, let's get at it. Is it abaht a young man? for they do cause a 'eap of trouble, as I well know, from first to larst. So is it a young man? Don't be shy."

Miss Cave shook her head again.

"Oh, no," she said. "It is nothing about a young man. I have never had a sweetheart. I have never had time."

"Then what 'ave you been cryin' your eyes out for, my dear? For cryin' you 'ave been, and chance it."

The girl looked about her nervously.

"Oh, please do go," she said. "If Mrs. Hamersley knew you had come she would be so angry."

"My dear, Mrs. 'Amersley ain't nothin' to me. I pays my way, and I does as I pleases; so be as frank as you like, and tell me all abaht it. 'Ave you a mother?"

"Yes — oh, yes," cried the girl broken-heartedly. "And she's very ill, and perhaps dying —"

THE OTHER SARA

"Then why don't you go to 'er? Where is she?"

"In a far-away village in Wales. It would take some days to get there, and — Mrs. Hamersley says she can't spare me just now. I know I've no right to ask for another holiday, for I had one at Christmas. But, oh! it seems so hard; and mother wants me so."

"And she shall 'ave you," said Sara decidedly. "So jest dry your eyes and put into a 'andbag all you'll want for the journey."

"Oh, I daren't — I can't. It's no use," answered the girl forlornly.

"What time is the first train in the mornin'?" asked Sara judicially; "and from what station?"

"At 6.15 from Paddington to Cardiff," was the dull answer.

"Very well; you pack your bag and go to sleep with a easy mind. I'll come and wake you in the morning. And my own kerridge, with me in it, will take you to the station."

"Oh, Mrs. Grub, you are too good. Thank you with all my heart. I don't know why you should be so kind to me."

"There, there, child. I dare say the Lord meant us to give one another a 'elpin' 'and now and then, and chance it. So hop into bed, and don't cry no more."

Poor little Lucy Cave bade her new friend good-night, and went to bed as she was told, feeling strangely comforted and strengthened.

And the early March morning saw her driving to Paddington under Sara's motherly wing.

"I'll put it all right with my second cousin Selina, so don't you worry," said Sara, as she put the girl into



THE OTHER SARA

a second-class carriage, and gave her her ticket. "And here's a trifle of ten pounds to get any little thing your mar might fancy, as invalids will do; and take it as a gift from a elderly woman as 'asn't no one belongin' to her to give gifts to. And, 'ere, boy, bring along one o' them luncheon-baskets. And maybe you'd like a piper or two to wear away the time, my dear. And you'll send me a line to say 'ow your mar is. Well, there's the whistle, and keep up your 'eart. And the guard 'll look arter you, as well 'e ought, for I've give 'im 'arf a crown."

And as the train moved out of the station Sara waved a large handkerchief, and nodded her head violently until her charge was out of sight.



Chapter VIII

MRS. HAMERSLEY was highly indignant when she heard that the governess had taken what she called "French leave," and announced her intention of dismissing her at once, by letter.

"Well, cousin, and if you do, I dare say she'll get an easier place without much trouble," said Sara; "for I did 'ear Sallie say a few days ago that old Lady Carstairs wanted a young woman to answer letters and do odds and ends of shoppin' and such-like. And Lucy Cave 'll find those as 'ull give 'er a character, I've no doubt."

Mrs. Hamersley took no notice of this speech, but helped herself to another cup of coffee, drank it hurriedly, and left the table.

"Of course, I knew she'd 'ave the 'ump," said Sara resignedly. "But there, it was to be expected. She won't find another Lucy Cave in a 'urry."

In the afternoon Sara and Sallie, in the former's new brougham, drove to Lady Ellen Dunsettle's house in Curzon Street. To Sara the house seemed gloomy, sunless, and old-fashioned. But her experienced eyes noted that the furniture was what she called "gen-ooin."

Lady Ellen greeted Sara with a gracious cordiality that set the honest soul at her ease at once, and introduced her son, a tall, dark-eyed man of forty or thereabouts, with a slight stoop, and a kind smile.

THE OTHER SARA

James Cuthbert Vanburgh Dunsettle was a bachelor, who had had what is popularly known as "a disappointment" in his youth. He had forgotten all about it years ago; but its far-away melancholy still tinged his voice and his manner generally. He moved and spoke and smiled like one who views life from the chilly aspect of the clouds, but who, nevertheless, unwillingly traverses the commonplace plains below.

It had for long been his mother's darling wish that he should marry Sally, whom she already loved as a daughter; and, possibly, had Sallie been free, he would have obeyed the maternal behest by proposing for her. But he was a very proper and well-regulated person, and would not have willingly entertained the idea of admiring, otherwise than platonically, the promised wife of his neighbour. Nevertheless, he considered Sallie a very charming young woman, and passed much of his time in her company. And Evan Rollestone was madly jealous of him.

Privately, Sallie considered James Cuthbert Vanburgh Dunsettle just a bit of a prig. But neither James nor Evan was aware of this opinion. Clearly, *Te Deums* ought to be sung by all of us for the opinions regarding us — of which we are unaware — that are entertained by our friends.

James Dunsettle was not at first impressed by Sara of Limehouse. He rather deplored, as a rule, his mother's predilection for picking up extraordinary geese and labelling them swans.

Nevertheless, he was scrupulously polite and attentive to Sallie's second cousin; and might have been rewarded by her mental verdict — had he known it —

THE OTHER SARA

that he was "quite the gentleman, though a bit slow."

"Your mar tells me you 'ave a fine taste in queerios, my lord — that is to say, sir," she said, as he seated himself in a low chair beside her. "And I will say there are things in this very room as might well be in South Kensington Museum. Which many an hour I've spent among the rickety, worm-eaten old things there — the chairs especially, shaky-lookin' and wore away, no doubt by royalty and peerages settin' on them from the third to the fourth generation. I dessay, now, that most of the things in this 'ere room 'as bin in the family nex' door to always. For genooin they are to a leg, and them in the 'all as well. And, arter all, that's the surest way of tellin' if things is faked up or not nowadays; for the cunnin' of fakers-up is beyond belief. Not that it's all a picnic, agein' furniture. It takes abaht as much time and trouble to make up tables and chairs to look old as it takes some women to make themselves up to look young. But then, of course, there's allus the chance that some jay with 'eaps of coin will pay seven times what it's worth. Not that I ever went in for fakin' up furniture myself, bein' honest by nature, though I 'ave kep' a antique shop."

"Ah, yes; so my mother told me," said Mr. Dunsettle. "I wonder if I have ever seen your — er — establishment. It is rather a fad of mine, wandering about in search of odds and ends that may prove worth picking up."

"Lor', my lord — that is to say, sir — don't worry calling my little place an establishment, nor anything but a plain shop," remonstrated Sara. "Professor

THE OTHER SARA

Mangell, now, calls it a umpireium; though why, I don't know, for never a football was in it or near it. You must have seen it, sir, if you've ever been in War Lane, Limehouse. It's just round the corner from the Dolphin, which is a public-'ouse, as the name tells. It's very 'andy for my drop of beer in the fore-noons and evenin's, which I've always took from youth up, though never exceedin', as is where the danger lies."

"I don't know Limehouse at all, I'm afraid," said Dunsettle. "I suppose you have given up the — er — shop, then?" he added.

"Well, I've given it, temporarily, to a pore widow of the name of Claptry," said Sara. "I've promised as I'll let 'er 'ave it for a year rent-free, and her to keep what she makes. But she 'as a list of folks as bargains is to be give to, and if you care to be one of 'em, you can."

Mr. Dunsettle thanked her, and had just invited her to go into the library and give her opinion on some of his "odds and ends of bargains," as he called them, when a dark, thin, pretty young woman rustled up to them, and said in a shrill but sweet voice, with a faint American twang:

"I'm just dying to make your acquaintance, Mrs. Grub. Terence Agnew talks about you by the hour. Do be quick and introduce us, Mr. Dunsettle."

James complied, and presented the young woman as Miss Torrens.

"How d'ye do, my dear?" said Sara. "Well I know your name, though perhaps the Torrens I know may be no relation, bein' nothin' more nor less than a butcher in St. George's Road."

THE OTHER SARA

"I don't fancy he's one of my family," laughed the girl. "My grandfather was a butcher in Chicago, but I surmise none of us ever came to England. Now, do tell me every single thing about yourself, Mrs. Grub. I've heard about your fascinating old furniture-shop. I love these places. It's too sweet to think of you coming into all that money in a jump. My poppa's made a pretty fair pile; but, then, he saw it coming, and headed for it all along. I'm Sallie's dearest friend, you know. I've been stopping with people down in Cornwall, so that's why you haven't seen me before. I'm in love with the man she's going to marry. Have you seen him? Isn't he a dear?"

"Lor', child, how you do run on!" said Sara, smiling at the speaker indulgently. "But there, all Americans 'as that way. I remember a man as 'ad a shop after the same class as my own — an American 'e was. Straight — he could talk for hours without drawin' breath, in a way of speakin'. And talk about fakin' furniture — well, he would take in Solomon himself. I've known 'im get 'old of — say, a genooin old Sheraton cabinet; and he'd take it all to pieces, and build up as many different bits of furniture as there was bits of that cabinet. And no one couldn't tell 'em from the real thing when they'd been lef' out in 'is back yard in the wet for a bit, and kicked and throwed about crool, to look antique. For one thing, he took a dror from the fust cabinet — the real thing — and fitted it into a little kidney table he made for it out of old seasoned wood — for he was a rare partic'lar and finickin' 'and at 'is work — then he banged it abaht, and knocked little bits out of it 'ere and there, and every indivijil nail had been well rusted before it was drove



THE OTHER SARA

in. Then he spilled ink and candle-grease over it, and let it lie in a corner till it was thick as thick with dust. And one fine day he puts it outside his door on the pavement, and half-covers it with silly odds and ends. And what 'appened? W'y, a dealer as fancied himself as bein' the knowingest in the trade came along and offered ten bob for it. But no — my friend wasn't takin' any. So the dealer came back and back, and at larst planked down fifteen golden suvrins, and thought he'd got a bargain at that. And well 'e might, for he sold it for thirty. But my friend didn't care, 'avin' made 'is profit. And every identical dror and door and leg of that fust cabinet was built round, in a manner of speakin', in the same way."

"My! He must have made a fortune," said Miss Torrens.

"Well, I dessay 'e did, from fust to larst; but it all went down 'is throat in the form of neat gin. And swelled up crool, and died by inches, which was a painful end for anyone as 'ad talent, even though mis-directed, as the sayin' is."

"Now, Mrs. Grub, you really must inspect my treasures," said Mr. Dunsettle, looking faintly amused. "Though I feel rather nervous in case you denounce my most cherished 'pieces' as ingenious frauds."

"I want to come, too. May I?" asked Miss Torrens, putting her daintily gloved little hands together in a pleading way she rather affected.

Ultimately the whole party found their way to the library, which was a large, comfortable room at the back of the house, with a deep bay-window looking out upon some fine old trees. The fittings were of oak,

black with age. And all the furniture, pictures, and ornaments had been "picked up" at ridiculously small prices by Mr. Dunsettle himself.

"Now, don't be too severe, Mrs. Grub," said Lady Ellen, addressing Sara in the cordial tone she only kept for those she sincerely liked.

As a matter of fact, the characters of these two women in such totally different stations were curiously alike. Each had a warm and generous heart; each despised all shams and humbugs; and each, on occasion, could be exceedingly, if quietly, "nasty," in her respective way, should occasion require.

Thus their "drawing-together" was both sudden and progressive.

In the somewhat overcrowded collection of miscellaneous bric-à-brac Sara felt gloriously at home. She trotted about importantly, wearing what Mullins would have called her "business face," and examining each article with appraising minuteness and almost fierce scrutiny.

The prints and paintings she dismissed with a wave of her hand.

"I don't know nothin' abaht picturs," she said briefly. "Picturs and lace and old glass I leaves to others, likewise embroidery. But in anythink called furniture, or china, or pewter, or old Sheffield plate, or old mirrors, no one carn't beat me, deny it who will — even if it was Christie himself."

"Isn't she just too delicious!" said Miss Torrens to Terence, who had that moment come in. "I mean to get poppa to ask her down to our new place in Essex. I'm going to have a regularly jolly little house-party for Easter."

THE OTHER SARA

"She's a rare old rough diamond," acquiesced Terence. "She's enjoying herself, bless her! You'll hear her in a minute offering old James a lump sum for the lot — out of pure habit."

Meanwhile Sara, having "passed" as "genooiin" various chairs, cabinets, and tables, had triumphantly pronounced a presumably antique gilt-framed mirror to be a "modern fake."

"And badly faked at that," she said, shaking her head. "Look at that there bevel! Why, it's as sharp as sharp. It ain't no more what the trade calls the 'low Vaux'all bevel' than my 'and-mirror. And the frame — why, it's a young frame, as the sayin' is. I bet twenty years, or less, is its outside."

Dunsettle protested, for this particular mirror was dear to his heart, and he had bought it for seven and ninepence in a dark and grimy shop in Clapham, and brought it home in a cab.

But Sara was obdurate, and stuck to her guns.

"And that there chair," she added, pausing before an elbow-chair — one of a set of eight — in beautiful dark mahogany. "That's a old English chair, right enough. But it's a 'eap older than the arms, which 'as been made and fitted on not so very long ago. The seat would 'a been a inch and a 'alf wider if it 'ad started as a elbow-chair. The other elbow-chair and the six smalls is all right. But you measure the seats, and you'll see as I'm correct; for it's well known in the trade that the seats of the smalls is allus nigh a inch and a 'alf narrerer than the arm-chairs. It's a pity; but that's the truth."

"I always had doubts as to that chair," said Dunsettle, surveying it disconsolately.

THE OTHER SARA

"But there," observed Sara, with an encouraging smile, "anyone's liable to be took in in queerios. Why, I myself paid twenty-five shillings for a old carved chair as I could have sworn on my dying couch was Queen Anne, and old at that. And no sooner did I get it 'ome, and paid a boy sixpence for bringin' it, than I found I'd been jiggered; for it was nothin' but a well-kicked-about and left-out-in-the-weather reproduction. But, bless you! we're none of us infallible."

"You are a dear, funny old thing," exclaimed Miss Torrens, squeezing the speaker's arm effusively. "You will come to my Easter house-party, won't you?"

"I will, with pleasure, my dear, if you want me. I'll 'ave to bring Mullins, of course."

"Mullins? Is that your dog? What a cute name! Certainly bring him. I never go anywhere without my little Nixey."

"A dorg!" repeated Sara, laughing heartily. "Why, I ain't got no dog. Mullins is my maid."

"Oh, of course, you must bring her. But why haven't you got a dog? Mostly everyone has."

"Ah, well, I've never 'ad one since a little Irish terrier I 'ad was pizened on the very doorstep. And two days later my pore cat was run over before my very eyes. I loves animals, but what with one thing and what with another, I've give up 'avin' pets. A cousin of my late 'usband's was a dog-fancier, and the way the tails of these pore little puppies was cut off, or bit off, was enough to give one the creeps; for what God 'as joined together let not man put asunder,

THE OTHER SARA

say I, and chance it. Oh, you may laugh, but I know my Prayer-Book as well as the best."

When they returned to the drawing-room, the party was augmented by a tall, thin woman, who surveyed her neighbours unceasingly through a pair of long-handled tortoiseshell eyeglasses, and upon whose lips an habitual sneer rested. This was the Honourable Augusta Heyskill, a distant cousin of Lady Ellen's. The Honourable Augusta's half-sister had married Silas Torrens — presumably for his millions, for she was too glacial to appreciate his warm heart, and too apathetic to discern his sterling character — and had only lived long enough to bring a girl-child into the world, and express a wish that it should be christened Armine Gertrude. Then, in a perfectly ladylike and composed manner, she had closed her eyes and died. Silas mourned her sincerely, and never replaced her, concentrating all his love and care upon his daughter, to whom, as his friends were wont to say, he would have "given his eyes to play with."

Lady Ellen, who at first had viewed this monied alliance with stiff disapproval, had learned to respect and tolerate her good-natured and gigantic kinsman by marriage, though his accent and laugh made her shiver. Armine she treated with medicated affection. The girl had "ways" which sometimes jarred upon her, but she could not but acknowledge that the unconventional little American was sincere and true-hearted, if not always unexceptionable in her manners.

Silas himself never — or at least rarely — put in an appearance at the house in Curzon Street. He was pleased, however, that his daughter should visit there

THE OTHER SARA

occasionally, feeling complacently conscious that, as he put it, she could "hold her own with any of the lot."

The Honourable Augusta surveyed Sara so persistently and so disapprovingly through her eyeglasses that that honest soul felt almost disconcerted.

"For goodness, Terence, hide me away from that starin' image," Sara whispered to Terence, "or I'll 'ave a fit, or somethink. Whoever is she, and what's she glarin' at me like that for, as if I was a squirrel in a cage? Lor', if Lady Ellen ain't a-bringin' 'er over 'ere!"

"Mrs. Grub, may I introduce my cousin, Miss Heyskill?" said Lady Ellen pleasantly. "Terence, go and talk to Armine. She wants your advice about the theatricals for the Gore-Wysters' bazaar."

"I hope I see you well, miss," said Sara briefly; for she resented the haughty bearing of her new acquaintance.

"Er — you are a relative of Mrs. Hamersley's, I understand," said the Honourable Augusta in a chilly voice, as her kinswoman left them. "I don't call on Mrs. Hamersley, but I believe my cousin does. Are you a stranger to London?"

"No, I ain't a stranger to London," answered Sara; "but I can't say as 'ow I'm at 'ome in this part of it."

"What part do you come from?" inquired the other, taking in every detail of Sara's plain but costly attire.

"I comes from Limehouse," answered the latter briefly.

"Really! From Limehouse? How strange! That is somewhere near the docks, is it not? I didn't know

THE OTHER SARA

anyone really lived there," said Augusta, with raised eyebrows.

"Oh, yus, there's a good many of us as has lived there off and on," replied Sara dryly—"and died there, for that matter, and starved there, and laid on beds of sickness there, and ate hearts out there. But it ain't a place as 'ud suit you, I dessay; nor you wouldn't suit them, either. Why, they'd 'ave that pair of glasses on a 'andle knocked out of your 'and before you could say 'knife.' They ain't fond of bein' stared at, like things in a microscope at a school treat, ain't the people in Limehouse."

With a somewhat heightened colour the Honourable Augusta lowered the instrument referred to.

"Did you live near the river, then?" she asked, after a pause.

"No, miss. My shop was in War Lane."

"Your *shop!* I—surely—I don't quite understand. A *shop!*"

"Yus. A shop-of-all-sorts, in a way of speakin'," was the sturdy answer—"a shop where everythink was marked in plain figures, and every queerio warranted. Then I 'eard that I'd come into money, and was a second kind of cousin to Mrs. 'Amersley."

"A shop!" repeated Augusta, half to herself, in a kind of angry bewilderment. "What on earth can Ellen be thinking about?"

Sara's simmering wrath suddenly boiled over.

"Don't demean yourself talkin' to me, miss," she said, in a voice quite as haughty as Augusta's own. "I 'ave a shop, and I 'ave friends as 'as shops, and I ain't ashamed of myself nor of them. I was brought to Bryanston Square agin my will, and there, seem-

THE OTHER SARA

in'ly, I've got to stay, and pay my way 'andsome. And some folks 'as been fluent and affable to me, in spite of my speech and manners bein' different to these of the West End. But I don't wish no patronizing ways; and I don't like your snuff-the-moon airs, miss, nor your long eyeglasses, nor your scornful manners. So if you'll excuse me, I'll say good-day."

And the little lady from Limehouse, her head held very high, waddled across the room to where she had a few minutes ago seen Sallie's red-gold hair against a dull green curtain.



Chapter IX

SALLIE, however, had been lured into the conservatory by James Dunsettle.

This conservatory was a favourite hobby of Lady Ellen's. It was full of overhanging palms, climbing heliotrope, many-coloured hyacinths, and masses of tenderly-hued azaleas. Great white lilies shone through wildernesses of maidenhair fern, and the air was heavy with the fragrance of roses.

James Dunsettle might be a prig — whatever that much misused term may mean — but he was certainly very good-looking. This struck Sallie forcibly as he stood leaning against one of the iron pillars, and looked down at her with a curious intentness of expression that somehow disturbed her.

"You seem vexed or worried about something. What is it?" she said impulsively, letting her hand momentarily touch his arm.

"Do you think so?" he answered abstractedly. "Well, most people are vexed or worried about something, are they not?"

"Oh, yes; I dare say. But you are so nice, James — though you are just a tiny bit of a prig — that I hate to think of your being anything but happy or comfortable."

"It is very kind of you, Sallie," he said, with a queer little smile.

"No, it isn't. When I like people I want them to

THE OTHER SARA

have a good time. Why don't you marry? I'm sure you'd make a dear, kind husband."

"Do you think so, Sallie? Do you really think so?"

"Yes, I do. *Why* don't you marry? Isn't there anyone you care for?"

"Yes," he answered, bending to nip a dead leaf from a rose-geranium.

"Really? Then, of course, you — but perhaps you haven't spoken to her?"

"No."

"Oh, James! But why?"

"She cares for someone else," he answered — "at least, she is engaged to someone else."

"How tiresome!" said Sallie, knitting her brows. "Then I suppose you really ought to forget about her?"

"Really, I suppose I ought," he agreed. "But, then, it is so difficult to forget about people."

"Is it? Well, yes; I can understand that," she said, thinking of Evan. "I suppose," she continued, "that you are quite, quite sure she cares for the man she is going to marry?"

"I said she was engaged," he answered dryly. "I didn't say she was going to be married."

There was a moment's silence. Then she said, without looking at him:

"James, I sincerely hope you don't mean me?"

"If I did, I should hardly be likely to tell you, Sallie," was the gloomy answer.

"But how curious!" she said, trying not to feel amused. "Do you really mean me?"

"I'm afraid I do! I ought not to say so, of course."

THE OTHER SARA

But, after all, what does it matter? You and your lover can laugh over it together, and —”

“James, do you really suppose I should breathe a word of it? But — are you quite sure?”

He laughed. But his laugh was hardly suggestive of merriment.

“I wish I were not so sure,” he said.

“But I am really most awfully sorry,” she answered, looking up at him with grieved, adorable eyes. “I do so hope it hasn’t been my fault in any way. You see, I never for a moment thought — I have always thought of your being faithful to that old affair with my Aunt Caroline —”

“Oh, damn your Aunt Caroline!” he exclaimed. “Really, I beg your pardon; but it is intolerable that that far-away episode should be brought up time after time. It never was anything serious, as a matter of fact —”

“Not serious?” she echoed. “Why, I thought your heart was nearly broken.”

He made an impatient movement.

“Hearts don’t break,” he said; “and mine was never even cracked. However, forget what I have said, Sallie. After all, my — er — esteem can’t do you any harm, or Rollestone either. I hope you will both be very happy, and all that, if ever you do get married.”

“If ever we do?” she repeated. “But of course we shall. And yet — oh, dear me! I don’t know,” she added, somewhat forlornly. “Sometimes it seems almost hopeless — unless something very wonderful turns up.”

“A man has no right to ask a woman to bind her-

THE OTHER SARA

self to him, unless he has at least some prospect of being able to keep her," he said, almost violently.

Sallie grew very red, then very pale, and the pupils of her eyes seemed to spread until the iris was almost hidden.

"James," she said, very, very quietly, "I like you very much. I have always liked you very much. But if you speak unfairly of Evan I shall not like you at all. Please understand that."

"I am not speaking against him," he answered obstinately. "I said, and I maintain, that a man has no right to ask a woman to marry him until he is in a position to marry."

"He was in a position to marry when he asked me to marry him," she said hotly. "If he hadn't lost money in that Bolivia thing he would be quite decently off now. You lost money in it, too."

"I had only myself to think of."

"Ah, well, Evan had me to think of. So, of course, he wanted to make as much money as he could." Then she added: "If you had been ever so poor, and I had not been engaged to Evan, you would have been only too delighted to have been engaged to me, even though we couldn't have been married for years and years."

"Sallie, that is a most unwarrantable thing to say," he said sternly. "No woman has a right to say a thing like that."

"I don't care," she answered (and, indeed, she did not). "I only want to show you that you are censuring Evan for doing exactly what you would have done yourself."

"It is not a subject that admits of discussion," he

THE OTHER SARA

said; "so, if you please, we will drop it. You are engaged to Evan, and —"

"Exactly. I am engaged to Evan, and I can't marry you, so there's an end of it," she answered sharply.

James drew himself up very stiffly.

"You forget," he said, "that I have not presumed — could not presume —"

But here a third person came upon the scene; and unfortunately, that person was Evan Rollestone. His eyes were blazing, and his face was exceedingly white.

"I am really very sorry, Sallie," he said in an utterly untranslatable voice, "but I unintentionally overheard your last remark. I had no idea — stupid of me, of course — but I had absolutely no idea that I stood between you and Mr. Dunsettle. I can only say that I release you from your engagement, and retire in his favour."

Sallie was silent.

"My dear Rollestone," exclaimed James hurriedly. "This is absurd — absurd on the face of it. When you are calmer you will see how — how — what nonsense you are talking. You cannot be in earnest."

"I am perfectly calm," replied Evan, who was palpably shaking with rage; "and I am quite in earnest."

Then Sallie spoke.

"You really are in earnest?" she said, in a carefully modulated tone. "Think what you are saying, Evan, and what you are doing. We have had this scene, with variations, before; but we are not going to have it again. If you release me from our engagement now, it will be final."

THE OTHER SARA

"Certainly," was the determined answer. "I mean it to be so. It cannot —"

"But, God bless my soul, Rollestone, this is madness!" interrupted James in genuine distress. "I can assure you that you are making a terrible mistake. Sallie was only a few minutes ago — only this moment, indeed —"

But Rollestone, with a stiff bow that included both, had turned and left them, shutting the conservatory door quietly but firmly behind him. If he had banged it, Sallie felt that, even now, matters might have been put right. But the quiet, determined click of the latch spelt finality. And Sallie's heart sank like the light of a candle in the wind.

She turned upon the unhappy James almost savagely.

"Now you see what you have done!" she exclaimed, with an unruly catch in her breath. "You have made me the most miserable girl in the world."

If James was a prig, he was a generous one; for he forebore to point out with whom the obvious fault lay.

"I am very, very sorry," he said. "I am more sorry than I can say."

But Sally took no notice.

"It is quite easy to be sorry," she answered coldly. "People are always sorry when it is too late. I shall never forgive you, James — at least, I don't feel as if I ever shall."

"My offence was unpardonable," he said. "And yet, in a way, it was unavoidable."

"I am horribly disappointed in you," she went on. "I could not have believed that you would have been

looking at you."

"There are times to look
to look at people," was the c
say you were — perhaps wi
ing at me in a way that made

James did not answer; for
indictment might be true.

"And now," resumed Sal
likely accept a post abroad,
come back."

"Lucrative posts abroad ar
ing on every bush," observed
beginning to feel ill-used and r

"Perhaps not. But only a
er's cousin, General Macgrego
good thing as surveyor some
but he refused, because — beca
is a horribly unhealthy place, w
pronounce, much less spell, and
Now, of course, thanks to you,
probably die out there."

"Oh no," said James, some
of his

THE OTHER SARA

forgive what otherwise would be an absolutely brutal remark. But I suppose, as people grow older, they grow harder and less sympathetic. I am going now. I am very, very sorry I ever came."

"So am I," returned her companion truthfully enough.

get my breath. Nobody ain't ill, and nobody knows I'm 'ere, 'avin' come entirely on my own, as the sayin' is, and come in a cab, instead of my own kerridge, all becos I can't sit by and see lovin' 'earts quarrellin' without 'avin' a try to put 'em right. Now, it's all very well for you to look at the clock, but I'm going to say what I have to say, if I stop here all night."

"I don't quite understand," the young man answered, as irritably as was consistent with politeness. "But will you not sit down?"

"Thanks, I will," she said, sinking heavily into the chair he offered her; "for your stairs are tryin' to those as weighs fourteen stone, even with summer clothin' on. And with these 'ere furs, and everythink, I should think fifteen would be nearer it. However, I didn't come 'ere to talk about myself nor my clothes. I came to say to you that you're makin' a great mistake goin' off wild-goose-chasin' without sayin' good-bye to the girl you are engaged to."

"Miss Hamersley has not told you, then, that she is no longer engaged to me?" he said quietly.

"Miss 'Amersley 'as told me some silly nonsense about you flyin' off in a 'uff, without listenin' to rhyme nor reason," answered Sara, with an unconscious and irresistibly comic caricature of Evan's voice and accent. "Why a grown man should take pleasure in actin' like a spoiled baby-boy is best known to yourself. But when it comes to writin' stiff notes, and sendin' back letters and presents, and so vexin' the child that her pore little face is all pinched and pathetic-like — well, it's a bit off, and a crool shame. And if Sara Grub can do anything to make matters right before to-morrer mornin', she will."

After a pause, Sara

“ And to think of you go
that she wanted to marry tha
nice gentleman, to be sure, I
uncle, at the very least. You
she added emphatically, “ for
pore young thing settin’ at t
bedroom in the dark, with the
eyes as wet as wet, I ses to
‘ without wishin’ to pry into
Sara what’s vexin’ you, and r
And she did, and showed me t
of letters and things. And pl
wasn’t cryin’, only the rain ‘ad
you want to go to foreign part
but no blessin’ ’ll come to you i
your ‘eart and jealousy in you
what jealousy leads to down o
upper classes it may be diff
‘ Jealousy is as crool as the g
said ‘ crool as a bricklayer,’ whic
’is sweetheart to death because
jealous of ’

THE OTHER SARA

was conscious of the sound of Sara's monotonous, somewhat highly pitched voice, but had not the slightest idea of what she was talking about; for his interest had stopped short at the forlorn little picture of a girl sitting at an open window in the dark, while the rain blew in upon her face and hair. Mentally he cursed what he called his infernal temper. Of course, he saw now what his jealousy had misunderstood that day in the Dunsettles' conservatory. Doubtless Dunsettle had allowed Sallie to become aware of what most other people had been aware of for a considerable time — namely, that he — Dunsettle — was in love with her. Well, he — Evan — did not blame him, poor devil! For now that the glamour of his fury had somewhat died down, he knew very well that Sallie would no more marry Dunsettle than she would marry Terence.

Sara sat and watched him, and her motherly heart longed to comfort him as she would have comforted her own son if she had had one.

And then, by a few simple words, he enshrined himself in her heart for ever.

Coming to a sudden standstill beside her chair, he said, in a voice that few of his friends would have recognized:

“Mrs. Grub, what do you advise me to do?”

Sara nodded approvingly.

“There — now you're talking,” she answered in a tone of satisfaction. “You see, you can't go and ride roughshod over a young gal's feelin's, and then look for 'er to be as affable as if nothin' 'adn't bin said. It wouldn't be nateral. Still — Easter's comin' on, and it's a time for peace and goodwill.”

“I don't suppose she will want to have anything

may happen before you meet
Lord ever intends you to me
specially told, 'Is ways are
my advice to you is that you
'er a note — the kind of note
want to. And I'll take it to
'ave a friendly partin', and s
with a boundin' 'eart."

"You're a good old soul,'
hand on Sara's plump shoulde
do worse than take your advic
back unopened," he added, wi

"Don't you worry abaht
sagely. "Women ain't so fo
ters unopened. They're a he
letters that ain't addressed to
letters as is addressed to them
for that."

Ultimately the note was writ
in triumph.

As Evan came upstairs a
visitor into a cab his tea "

THE OTHER SARA

"Another lady?" echoed Evan, frowning. "What was she like? Young or old?"

"Young, sir; and a real lady. She arsked if you was in, and I said you was, but —"

"Did she leave any name?" asked Evan.

"No, sir. She just said it didn't matter, an' walked away, and got in a 'ansome passing the corner of the street, for I sor 'er with my own eyes."

Evan passed on his way upstairs without further speech, and his landlady went downstairs shaking her head.

"The ways of 'em!" she muttered, as she reached her kitchen—"the ways of 'em! Three years has 'e lodged in these rooms, and never a sign of a female. And now, two at once. Not but what one warn't no chicken, nor no more a lady than me—that fust one. The ways of 'em! However, it ain't none of my business."

When Sara got back to Bryanston Square, she proceeded at once to Sallie's room. The door was shut and locked, and Sara's sharp little knock only elicited a muffled —

"You can't come in. I've a bad headache, and have gone to bed."

"It's me, dearie," said Sara through the keyhole. "And I've got somethin' you'll be glad and happy to see."

"I'll see it in the morning. I can't now."

"Now, be a sensible lamb, and open the door," said Sara coaxingly. "What I have'll cure your 'eadache the moment you look at it."

The door was flung open impatiently, and Sara hurried in.

...and give you
she held out Evan's letter.

To her amazement, the
hand, and tore it across an
flung herself against Sara's

"Oh, Sara, Sara, I'm ver-
queer, choked little voice.

"Lor', my dear, I don't
monstrated Sara. "Of cou
young fellow was to blame,
But it ain't Christian-like, te
without so much as looki
medium in all things."

"Sara," whispered Sallie,
to mention a word of what I :

"Now, as if I should!"
the wavy hair encouragingly.

Sallie was silent for a mo
said, under her breath:

"To-night, I thought that
blame, and I had a dreadful
let him go away all those the

What do you think? The landlady — a dreadful person, who smirked and smiled — said that he wasn't alone; that there was a lady with him."

"Well," said Sara, after a pause, "suppose there was? It might 'ave been 'is mar."

"Oh, nonsense! His mother has been dead for years," was the slightly hysterical answer. "And he has no sisters or any other female relations that ever heard of."

"Sallie 'Amersley," said Sara impressively, "don't you be so ready to think evil. The pore young fellow has no thought of anyone but yourself, as I well know. And as for ladies —"

"Oh, you absurd Sara!" burst out Sallie. "Do you suppose I don't know Evan is as straight as can be? But — I have an idea who it was —"

"Same 'ere," rejoined Sara. "I 'ave a idear who it was. But we'll 'ave your idear fust."

Sallie did not speak for a moment or two. Then she said slowly:

"You know, Armine Torrens is most fearfully gone on Evan — always has been. And he — well, he's the kind of man who — who do the most absurdly impetuous things when he is angry. I haven't seen Armine for ever so many days. And — my idea is that, in a fit of temper, he has engaged himself to her. So, in that case, of course, she wouldn't think anything of going to his rooms — though, to be sure, she wouldn't think twice about going if she wanted to, whether she was engaged to him or not."

"Ah, well," said Sara. "My idear is that it wasn't Miss Torrens at all."

“Yes, you may look,” was
“I’ll take my Bible oath this
to-night but me. For go to
it.”

“You, Sara — *you!*” the
ing bewilderment.

“Yes, me. Like a old
things as I ought to ’ave let
my reward. The letter tore
’adn’t never been written. W

“What time were you there

“From nine to ’alf-past, o
ten. For I was sittin’ facin’
shelf, and couldn’t ’elp but see
to see you’ve thought better of

For Sallie was already upo
the scattered fragments of t
lover, and piecing them togethe

Her face flushed a lovely rose
hurried lines, which were sign

“V-

THE OTHER SARA

"Not I," declared the other mendaciously. "I just said as 'ow I came to wish 'im good-bye. And then he looked that miserable — pore lad! — and the nex' think I knew 'e was writin' that idemical note, and arskin' me to give it to you. And as 'andsome as a picter 'e did look when 'e was settin' writin' it, and as white as a sheet or a pillow-case, which you like."

Then a sudden fear rushed over Sallie. The time was so short. And the morning would so soon be here.

"How I wish you had brought him back with you!" she exclaimed.

"Now, my lamb, don't be onreasonable. For well you know you wouldn't 'ardly speak to me — let alone 'im, and in your dressing-gown and all."

"I can't go to his rooms again," said the girl. "I simply couldn't face that beast of a landlady. And even if I send a note asking him to come, he may have gone out —"

"There weren't no goin' out in 'is 'ead to-night," said Sara emphatically. "Besides, to speak the truth, my dear, I told 'im that I'd send Mullins along with a answer if there was any. Not knowin', you see, if you'd forgive him or not — gals is queer — and no more didn't he. And 'e 'as to go down to Southampton to get 'is boat fust thing in the morning. Of course, I know one of them flunkeys could take it; but there's no need for 'em to know that you're sendin' for 'im. For I 'aven't a doubt every servant in the 'ouse knows you and 'e 'ave parted. For they do know mostly everythink, and couldn't but notice that 'e 'ain't been comin' near the place. But Mullins is as close as wax, and nothin' less than worships you, ever since you was so good to 'er that night she 'ad crool toothache."

“pore dears,” as she called the

She walked to the corner of
a cab, according to Sara’s insti

“I shan’t give the note in
’ands,” she resolved mentally.
the charnce of bein’ kep’ too lat
of landladies.”

So it came to pass that, for tl
ing, Evan’s landlady opened t
visitor, who demanded to see M

The landlady showed her ups

“*Another* lady to see you, s
describable tone.

And as she closed the door c
upon the haughty Miss Mullins,
ing her head:

“Three of ’em! Well, well,

In an incredibly short time Ev
dispatched Mullins, and flung hi

It was about a quarter to el
turbable Graves opened the do
Square, and the even more
showed him into the dimly-lit

Sally in a

THE OTHER SARA

And thus they made their peace.

"Do you know," she said, when some time had passed, "that I went to your rooms to-night?"

"Ah, it was you!" he interrupted. "I hardly dared to hope it."

"It was me," she answered ungrammatically.

"And when your landlady said a lady was with you, I immediately thought it was Armine Torrens; and that you had very likely engaged yourself to her just out of pique. And when Sara gave me your note, I tore it into four pieces, I felt so mad."

"But what on earth made you think I should engage myself to Armine Torrens?" he asked. "Of all the people in the world she would be about the last. And a short shrift I should get if I were to suggest such a thing."

"Oh, I don't know," began Sallie.

Then she stopped, remembering in time that it wouldn't be "playing the game" to give her friend away.

"Never mind her," said Evan. "Let's talk about ourselves. We have so little time."

When at last he rose to go, Sallie whispered:

"Then Sara and I will be at Waterloo to-morrow at 9:30. And, Evan, you'll give me back my ring, won't you?"

"I will," he answered.

EVAN had gone, and the following days and nights passed like other days and nights.

And to the watchful eyes of the family Evan was undeniably miserable.

For Evan Rollestone and his friends had been in London since they were children, and altogether unnatural to a reference to him.

Mrs. Hamersley was frankly disappointed at his departure. During his absence, she had hoped, and might even have expected, to see him at Dunsettle.

"Why has Evan gone away?" she asked one evening when Sallie had just come home from her walk just before dinner.

Lucy Cave had come back looking more subdued-looking than ever, in a dress of unrelieved black, and looking as though with much weeping.

"Why has Evan gone away?"

"Aren't you and he going to Dunsettle?"

"Evan's gone to seek his fortune."

heart down several degrees. The contingency mentioned by Alec seemed quite possible, in her present depressed state of mind.

"Don't you believe him," said little Anne quickly. "Evan wouldn't ever get to not love you. I'll bet he's just dying to come back this very minute."

"What do you know about it?" jeered Alec. "Men never want to come back, or they would never go away. I just wish I was with him. I dare say he'll have a rare old time shooting wild beasts and things. That's what I'm going to do when I'm a man. I'm going to be a wild-beast hunter. No silly goings-on with girls for me, nor getting engaged, nor married, nor any of that rot. Not much. Too, I'm going to be an explorer, and find out new places that nobody ever thought of. Miss Cave, what part of the map are the places on that haven't been found out?" he asked authoritatively.

"I don't know, Alec. I don't think places are put upon the map until they are found out," was the meek answer.

"You don't know!" the boy returned in a contemptuous tone. "You're a nice silly to be a governess, I must say."

"Don't be rude, Alec," said Sallie, in a listless way that was foreign to her.

"Sallie's got the hump! — Sallie's got the hump!" sang Alec, dancing provokingly, first on one leg and then on the other. "Sallie's lost her sweetheart!"

Here little Anne threw a diabolo-reel at him with such good aim that it caught him between the eyes. Whereupon a stand-up battle ensued, in the course of which Alec shook Anne until her teeth chattered, and

... whose entertainer
"undiluted ghastliness," as I

"What makes us come to see
the latter exclaimed pettishly.

"I came because I wanted
sing," answered Sallie. "Sh

"You don't think?" returned
bear it. It comes from too
line. Oh, Sallie, I'm in a r
And so are you, I dare say—
be. I mean, of course, because
going off in this tremendous
sick, I tell you, when I heard."

Sallie laughed.

"You are the most ridic
"Why on earth should you
doesn't belong to you."

"No; that's just it," was t
"He doesn't; and that's eno
cry. I think he's just the most
man I've struck on this side.
But if he had been free, poppa
that. Oh, Sallie, it does seem
have had every single thing I

"Shall I give up my claims to him in your favour?"

The other shook her pretty dark head.

"It wouldn't be a bit of use, even if you were serious," she answered. "He wouldn't look at me. He just adores you from top to toe. And yet I'm supposed to be pretty. And you — well, you are just a dear, but you aren't exactly pretty. Now, are you?"

"No, I suppose I'm not," returned Sallie cheerfully. "And yet, you know, I manage to have a very good time. I don't know why."

"No; that's it. It's just because you don't know that you do have a good time. It's something about you — some days I think it's your hair and some days I think it's your shape, and some days I think it's nothing — or everything. After all, it doesn't matter. I say, Sallie, do you know someone told me your engagement to Evan was broken off."

"So it was," was the composed answer — "for a week or so."

"My! I don't know how you could have done it," said Armine. "And how did you make it up again — and when?"

"Just the night before he sailed," said Sallie, ignoring the first question.

"You don't say! Well, that was touch and go. And when is he coming back?"

"I don't know. I wish I did. When he makes his fortune, I suppose," was the somewhat depressed answer.

"He'll never make his fortune," said the other. "Men like him never do. If he was a little skinnox of a creature, with a sandy beard and a turned-up nose, and no eyes to speak of, he would strike oil first thing

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he prospected. Oh dear! it's a beast of a world. And yet — dear old poppa gave me this string of pearls for my birthday. It cost two thousand dollars. But don't you think I'd rather have a fifty-dollar hat-pin from your Evan?"

"You are quite mad," laughed Sallie. "Have you ever confessed your affection to Evan himself?"

"Snakes! — no. I'm as mum as a fish when he's around. I expect he thinks I was an idiot from birth — or before."

Then she added:

"Say — there's that baked fool, Sheridan Faulds, floating along. And — my stars! if he isn't making eyes at your cousin. He'll be proposing matrimony to her one of these days, you'll see."

Sara had caught sight of the two girls, and hastened to seat herself beside them. Her attendant cavalier stood poised on one foot with his head on one side — a favourite attitude of his.

The little lady from Limehouse was resplendent to-night in amber-coloured satin "veiled" — to use the phraseology of the fashion papers — "in priceless black lace." Her hair was dressed in the prevailing style, and her hands were encased in white gloves, which had split at almost every seam. A gold necklet of barbaric width encircled her short, fat neck, and her round rosy face beamed with radiant satisfaction.

She evidently did not know what to make of Sheridan Faulds, who persisted in paying her extravagant compliments, and interlarding his conversation with classic and poetic allusions, which were, of course, so much Greek to Sara.

"I have been telling Mrs. Grub," he said, in the

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low, monotonously sad voice he usually affected, "that she ought to have her portrait painted. I have a friend — a genius, though unknown — who would do it for a thousand guineas."

"A jenny-ass, is he?" said Sara, with a sniff of disdain. "Well, anyway, he has sense enough to know how to charge. A thousand guineas! I should be a jenny-ass myself if I paid that for a picter of my old phiz. Why, I've had it done in the Commercial Road for seven and six the dozen. A thousand guineas! Well — straight! I should think your friend's made a fortin by now, ain't he? — if them's 'is prices."

Mr. Faulds shook his head.

"Alas! no. He has not as yet accepted any commissions."

"Commission! Is that the sassiety name for a photo — or what?"

The young man explained.

"Oh — he's a kind of amatoor, then?" said Sara disdainfully. "Well, he ain't goin' to practise on me. If I had any thoughts of throwin' away a thousand guineas for 'avin' my pictur' done, I'd 'ave a professional, and done with it."

"Besides," put in Armine, "if your friend is the one who gave the show in Bond Street last season, Mr. Faulds, I think even a hundred guineas a stiff price. They were freaks — any of his pictures I saw. I rather guess he doesn't accept many commissions. I don't see how he could expect to have the chance. Do you remember, Sallie? There was one thing called 'A Beauty of To-day.' At first you saw nothing but a room crammed full of furniture — and hideous furniture at that. Then, after searching the canvas from

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end to end with a magnifying-glass, you saw a spidery woman with next to nothing on, yawning before a mirror. I had to laugh."

"It was a great picture," said Mr. Faulds sadly. "It was bound not to be appreciated. It is ever the fate of great works — as of great men. I myself am not appreciated as I could wish."

"So few of us are," murmured Sallie.

"So few of us are what?" said Terence, suddenly appearing from behind a flowering plant — the above conversation having taken place in the conservatory.

"Mr. Faulds is complaining that he isn't appreciated," said Sallie.

"But why ain't you appreciated?" asked Sara, eyeing Mr. Faulds somewhat disparagingly. "Perhaps folks don't like the way you wears your 'air. What's your line?"

"My line?" repeated Mr. Faulds vaguely.

"Yus. What do you do for a livin'?"

"I am a poet," was the solemn answer.

"A poet? Oh, I know. You're one of them pore fellows who writes verses and 'as them printed on slips of paper, and sells them at the corner of St. Paul's Churchyard. At least, they used to, though I 'ear the County Council has given 'em notice to quit. Lor', Terence, what are you laughin' at? The gentleman said a poet, didn't 'e?"

"I fear you do not understand," said Mr. Faulds, who had grown rather red. "I do not sell my poems. They are too sacred to me. I could not use them as the sordid means of making a living."

"Then what's the use of 'em if you can't make nothin' out of 'em?" asked Sara suspiciously. "Why,

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even a street-singer expects a copper flung now and then, and chance it."

If Sara's income had been less, Mr. Faulds would have been mortally offended. But he had made definite plans, so he concealed the wounds to his vanity under a sickly smile.

"You have not heard any of my poems, Mrs. Grub?" he inquired, with a sigh.

"Lor', no. Not that I'd know a pome if I saw it. I'm a plain woman and 'ad a plain eddication. But it didn't run to poatry," said Sara contentedly.

"Should you care to — er — listen to a trifle I evolved since seeing you?" continued Mr. Faulds, attitudinizing against a pedestal, and toying with a climbing geranium.

Terence groaned, and sank into a seat beside Sara.

"Say 'No.' Say '*No!*'" he whispered despairingly.

"Lor', Terence, you are pinchin' my arm cruel," exclaimed Sara. "Whatever is the matter with you? If the gentleman wants to say 'is verses, let 'im. I shan't take no notice."

"But he'll be awfully disappointed if you don't take any notice," said Armine delightedly.

Mr. Faulds raised one hand.

"Hush!" he said.

Sara giggled aloud.

"Lor'!" she exclaimed, "if you don't look for all the world like a long-'aired chap as used to grind knives and scissors down our way some years back. A pore 'alf-witted creature 'e was, and I 'ave 'eard killed 'is old aunt with a chopper, which may be true or it mayn't. However I do know he was run over by a post-office van, which was no doubt a judgment."

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Again Mr. Faulds raised his hand to enjoin silence.
Then he chanted the following lines, his eyes turned
alternately upon the ceiling and Sara :

“Hark! Hark!
From the dark —
From the dark of the East —
To a feast,
Comes a queen.
Golden fetters enfold her,
All eyes may behold her.
Only one win and wear her,
The incomparable Sara.”

A pause, during which Terence murmured in an
ecstatic aside to Armine :

“Rub-a-dub-dub,
Three cheers for S. Grub.”

Faulds passed his hand over his eyes, like one who
awakes slowly from sleep.

“You like it, I hope?” he asked softly, addressing
Sara, as he seated himself in a green wire chair.

“Is that what you call poetry?” said Sara dubiously.
“I could have sworn it was rubbish. And for good-
ness, who was Sara? I never heard of a Queen Sara.
I ’ave ’eard of Queen Anne, for she had a special shape
of chair. And I’ve ’eard of the Queen of Sheba. A
bold ’ussey I always thought her, dressin’ ’erself up
payin’ visits to a married man, as Solomon certainly
was, and chance it.”

“Sara, you’re too modest,” said Terence. “Mr.
Faulds has composed the poem in your honour. You
are Sara — the queen from the East.”

“I’m sure it’s very kind of him,” said Sara, yawning
and looking at her watch, which she wore in season and

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out of season. "But Lor', my dear, it's late — long past twelve — and all the supper I've had wouldn't feed a bird. Either I'm goin' 'ome, or I'm goin' to 'ave somethink to eat. For listen to any more of that rubbishy music I won't. What do you say, sir? No; I 'aven't read any of your poatry. Watts' 'ymns is all the poatry I know, excep' 'Twinkle, twinkle, little star.'"

"I have only had about fifty copies printed," the poet went on. "'Lyrics of the Dust' is the title: 'a series of fantasies, by Sheridan Faulds.'"

"It seems an unchristian kind of name to inflict upon a infant," observed Sara, as Terence assisted her to rise. "Sheraton! Why, they might as well 'a called you Chippendale, and done with it."

"My name is Sheridan, not Sheraton," said Mr. Faulds, in a mortified tone.

"Oh, well, pronounce it Sheridan or Sheraton, which you like. In any case it's a kind of chair or cabinet or table, just as it may happen to be," said Sara, as she turned her head to see the effect of her train. "However, no one can't help their names. There's names I'd 'ave preferred to Grub. But it'll be all the same on the Day of Judgment. Oh, I say, whoever is that squawking in the other room? And they call that singin'! Give me a railway-whistle, and chance it."



Chapter XII

NEXT morning Sara said to Sallie, somewhat diffidently :

" See 'ere, Sallie. You're lookin' a bit mopish, and I don't blame you. So what do you say to comin' with me to Limehouse to spend the whole day? I've a 'eap of things to see to down there, and I kind of think you could give me a 'and, if you was willing."

" Very well," Sallie answered, " though I don't very well see what use I can be. What are you going to do? "

" Well, you see, it's like this," said Sara, looking curiously nervous and ill at ease. " You know I 'aven't quite got to feel my feet in the face of all this money — not yet. And I spoke yesterday to that Lirrip, and he says I can do a wonderful lot of things if I like. He did put it to me that I might give a thousand quid to some big charity or other, and 'ave my name in the papers in a list; and another thousand to the victims of some disaster. But, as I ses to 'im, there's plenty of asses wants to 'ave their names in the papers in lists, and I'm not one of 'em. I don't set up for bein' a chiritymonger nor nothink of that kind. But I do know cases where I could do a 'eap of good with my money. Lor', what's a singular woman like me to do with ten thousand golden suvirins a year? There's the seven 'undred to your stepmar, and say three 'undred for the kerridge and other odds and

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ends. And then there's clothes — and the Lord knows I've got enough of them to last me for the next twelve months. And there's Mullins; I mean to give 'er fifty quid a year, besides payin' your stepmar for her keep. So with the rest I mean to make as many folk 'appy as I can. I ain't going to what Mr. Lirrip calls 'pauperize' 'em, which I understand means givin' them the feelin' that they can 'ang on to me for the rest of their lives. But oh, my dear, I want 'em to be 'appy. There ain't too much 'appiness, Sallie, my gal. There ain't nearly enough to go round. Straight, there ain't."

"Why, you dear old Sara, your eyes are full of tears," cried Sallie, kissing the speaker impulsively.

"I'm a old idjit, and that's the truth," was the half-hysterical answer, as the honest soul hurriedly dabbed her eyes with a small lace-trimmed handkerchief, which she declared to be a "fool of a thing, and no more use than a bit o' paper."

"However," she added, "you get your things on, and we can talk as we're drivin' down. That there Tummas — he's a decent man, I will say, though one eye is a different colour from the other — he says the top of the kerridge can be let down, so as it's like an open kerridge, so I was thinkin' we might take little Bob Bassett, as 'as 'ad a fall and twisted his pore back and one leg, and give 'im a bit of a drive. Unless you'd objec' to be seen with a shabbily dressed kid like 'im."

"Object? Certainly not," said Sallie. "It's sweet of you to think of it. But that little lame girl you told me of — little Jessie Fergus — couldn't we take her, too?"

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"Well, so we might, now," was the hearty answer. "There, didn't I say as two 'eads were better nor one?"

When Sallie came down a little later, dressed for going out, Sara noticed with satisfaction that she was wearing the piece of lace from War Lane, which had been carefully washed and pressed by Mullins, and looked what it was — a very valuable piece of old Limerick.

"Well, you do set it off, my dear," said Sara approvingly, as they seated themselves in the latter's brougham. "I'm sure I've 'ad that bit o' lace for Lord knows how long, and used it as a duster many a time. Now, is there anywheres you want to go before we go down East?"

Sallie, after consideration, said she should like to look in at Madame Viro's for a few minutes, and Thomas was accordingly directed to drive thither.

Sara sat in the outer room while Sallie disappeared into the fitting-room. And as the former waited, her sharp eyes rested upon a young woman who was folding up various garments which lay strewed about hither and thither on the chairs and floor. The face of this young woman was of a yellowish pallor, and in contrast her eyelids looked almost startlingly red.

Sara looked at her narrowly for a minute or so. Then she said in a friendly tone:

"Come 'ere, my gal."

The young woman obeyed.

"Can I get anything for madame?" she asked, in a tired, subdued voice.

"No. I don't want anythink more just yet. I ain't got the taste of your madame's bill out of my mouth

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yet. Look 'ere, what 'ave you been cryin' for? What's gone wrong? Don't be shy with me, now. 'Ave you 'ad a row with that swindlin' black-velvet 'ussey as calls 'erself Madame Viro?"

"Madame Viro has turned me away," was the almost inaudible answer. "I do not give satisfaction, she says."

"And when are you leavin' ? And where are you goin'?" demanded Sara.

"I am leaving to-morrow. That is Madame Viro's custom. If we do not give satisfacton, we have a day's notice only. It is Madame's Viro's custom."

"And where are you goin'?" asked Sara again.

The girl shook her head.

"I don't know," she murmured. "I come from Scotland. I came up on purpose to come here. I can't go back. Our home was all broke up when my eldest sister died."

"'Ave you any money?" inquired Sara. "You needn't mind me askin'."

The girl hesitated and coloured.

"I've forfeited my salary," she said. "I spoiled some very expensive lace — I couldn't help it. It was an accident."

Here an electric bell rang sharply.

"Give me your name and address," said Sara, in an abrupt voice. "Quick! afore that old 'ag sails out."

"Oh, madame, it is kind of you. But —"

"Give me your name and address," rapped out Sara, banging her umbrella upon the floor.

"My name is Alice Newcroft," the girl said, in a scared undertone, as the electric bell whirled out more

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sharply than before. "And I am lodging at 306, Sale Street, Paddington. But I shall only be there until the day after to-morrow."

"And where then?" asked Sara.

The girl shook her head and disappeared into the inner room.

As Sara and Sallie were on their way to the East some ten minutes later, the former said, with sudden and vicious emphasis:

"Not another shilling will I put into the pockets of that grinnin' viper, not if I 'ad to go without a rag to my back. So 'elp me!"

Sallie looked bewildered. For her thoughts had been on board a certain swift ocean liner, on the way to West Africa.

Then Sara told her the story of Alice Newcroft.

"Poor thing!" commented Sallie. "But Viro often does things like that. She has a fiendish temper."

"Then she ought to be tied to a cart's tail and whipped," exclaimed Sara fiercely. "Turnin' that pore innocent out with no money nor character, and the girl lookin' like a ghost, and a cough to scare rats. For all that cat Viro cares, she might go on the streets. But I'll see as she doesn't, or my name's not Sara Grub."

All the way to War Lane she raged, her face red — indeed, almost purple — with unbridled indignation.

Widow Claptry received them smilingly, and kept up a bewildering succession of curtsies, first to one and then to another. She persisted in addressing Sallie as "my lydy" every minute or two, and presently — without a word or a hint on the subject from

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Sara — unearthed an armful of old lace from a band-box in a corner, and said triumphantly:

“Maybe her lydyship would like to look at them bits o’ lice. There’s some like that there bit she’s got on.”

“Right oh!” said Sara cheerily. “You take your pick o’ the lot, dearie. As well you ’ave any bits you fancy as sell ’em for a few pence to a pack of workin’ men’s wives as don’t know real lace when they see it — as, indeed, no more I do myself.”

Sallie revelled in old lace, and took full advantage of her kinswoman’s suggestion.

Presently Sara went off to make a tour of the premises, and Mrs. Claptry remained behind to prepare tea; for they were now in the “back-parlour” — a rather dark, but scrupulously clean little room, whose glittering window looked out upon a roughly paved court, about six feet by ten, containing one sooty lilac-tree, already showing symptoms of blossoming.

“I hope you’ll excuse me, my lydy, gettin’ the tea ready,” the old woman said, as she bustled about. “But I dare say you and Mrs. Grub ’ll be glad of a cup, my lydy, for it’s a long drive to the West — not that I’ve been there since years ago when a bit of a gal, when I went for a picnic to Kensal Green with two other gals — that’s to say, we ’ad sandwiches, my lydy, and oranges, and —”

“Don’t call me ‘my lady,’” smiled Sallie. “I am only Miss Hamersley.”

“Lor’! is that so? Well, you look the lydy, anyhow. And to think you’re Sara Grub’s second cousin, my lydy — miss, I mean. And she is a good soul, miss, if ever there was one.”

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"She is, indeed," assented Sallie heartily. "I am very fond of her. Aren't you?"

"I am, my lydy — miss, I mean — and good reason to be. I dessay she 'asn't told you all she did for me? It warn't only givin' me over this 'ere shop and parlour, it was the way she did it, my lydy — miss. And took me from crool misery and starvation, and paid money as I owed, and all, and let me keep my little sticks o' furniture, as they're up in my bedroom this minute, and would 'ave nigh broke my 'eart to part with. Sara knew that — bless her in her settin's down and in 'er risin's up, and if there's a heaven above, my lydy — miss, I mean — there'll be a place set apart for Sara Grub, or I'll know the reason why. And many a 'eart she's lifted up since this money came to 'er. Tons on tons of coals 'as she sent to poor creaturs, whose bones was froze and stiff with rheumatism and spring winds; and families she's fed as was sick with hunger, and got work for those as could work and wanted to — which they don't always."

"But when did she find time to do all this?" said Sallie wonderingly.

"It was a young man as came, and keeps comin', for that matter, my — miss, I mean. He said as 'ow he had been told to come by Mrs. Grub's lawyer; and 'ow Mrs. Grub — bless 'er for ever! — 'ad given 'im a list of deservin' cases, as he was to see to, and —"

But the entrance of Sara herself at this point put an end to Mrs. Claptry's disclosures.

"Well, Mrs. Claptry, I will say as 'ow everythink looks like a new pin for cleanness. I couldn't 'ave kep' the place better myself, and that's the truth.

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And now we'll 'ave a cup of tea, and then we'll take them pore lambs for their drive."

Poor little Bob Bassett was in a great state of excitement at the thought of driving in what he called "a real kerridge." I regret to state, however, that his joy was somewhat mitigated by finding that his privilege was to be shared by John Fergus's little daughter; for he was at an age when the youthful male despises the contemporary female, and rigidly excludes her from his point of view.

But the air was so soft and warm, and the sky so blue, and the sun so bright, that petty jealousies were soon forgotten, and he even submitted with a comparatively good grace to be enfolded in the same rug that sheltered Jessie.

At first both children were rather shy with Sallie. But she was one of those who possess a key to open the hearts of "these little ones." And long before they had reached the "West End" of their childish visions all shyness was forgotten, and they were shrieking delightedly at her droll stories and unexpected "ways."

Sara, under a lace-trimmed sunshade, beamed upon the trio like some beneficent, substantial goddess. She had left it to Sallie to choose the way they were to go, and the latter had suggested following Oxford Street as far as the Marble Arch, thence through the Park, and then through Kensington, Hammersmith, and Barnes, to the open country round Wimbledon Common. As they passed Buszard's, Sara called to Thomas to stop.

"Let's get the pore little dears some bits of cakes," she said. "You'd like cakes, wouldn't you, my lambs?"



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Needless to say the answer was an unqualified assent. And Sallie got out, and chose such good things as all children love — such things as these little East-Enders had never even imagined. The Park, with its trees and gay flower-beds, its dim stretches of green, bounded by the faint grey-blue haze of masses of distant foliage dimly seen, was a fairyland to these children of the slums.

“Eh, but it’s bonnie, bonnie!” exclaimed the little Scots girl, in an awed whisper. “Bobby, is it no bonnie?”

“It — ain’t ’alf bad,” answered Bobby, with quaint dignity. “But I’ve seen it afore — in a picter, I ’ave.”

Half an hour later they had left the great overgrown city behind them, and the sturdy cob leisurely climbed a steep hill, which led to a tiny village, consisting, apparently, of a post-office and grocery store combined, a couple of tumbledown cottages, and an old-fashioned inn, covered with close-growing ivy. A little further on a small square-towered church nestled behind a belt of tall trees, and near it the vicarage peeped over a high hedge of sweet-brier. The clock in the church tower struck two as they passed the little inn.

“Stop here, Tummas,” said Sara. “We’ll ask if we can ’ave summat to eat. I’m quite peckish, I declare. Ain’t you, Sallie? And I’ll bet the little uns are.”

Whereupon, after some discussion, the little invalids were carried into the inn by a stalwart young ostler and deposited on a broad sofa in the parlour. And there, in spite of previous countless cakes, they made a

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meal that caused Sallie to look at them in amused amazement.

"My, I do feel stout!" sighed Bobby at last, when he had convinced himself that further stoking would be imprudent, if not impossible. "I 'ave 'ad a good time, I 'ave."

Then, after a pause, he added:

"I say, miss, do you s'pose 'eaven 'll be a bit like this? — just drivin' through fine roads and countries, and stoppin' to 'ave a square meal whenever you're 'ungry?"

"Hoots, no!" put in little Jessie reprovingly. "Ye'll no get anythin' to eat in heaven, I'm thinkin' — unless a sup o' milk and honey, whiles. Will we, Mrs. Grub?" she added, appealing to Sara.

"Lor', my dear, 'ow can I tell?" returned Sara, finishing her glass of stout with relish. "I've 'ad my thoughts of 'eaven, like the rest of us. But I dare say it'll be like nothink we ever thought of when we get there — if ever we do. So long as we does our duty to ourselves and our neighbours 'ere below, we've no call to worry abaht what's goin' to 'appen to us above."

"Some folks goes to hell fire," observed small Jessie solemnly. "Dad read it out of the good book. But if I'm a good lassie, I'll be let go to heaven."

"My legs is tired," said Bobby, with the sudden fretfulness of the juvenile invalid.

"Weel, what of it?" returned Jessie. "My back's tired a' the time. In the night-time, too."

And she sighed resignedly.

Quite suddenly Sallie stooped and kissed her, with a strange pang of regret at the grievous handicap on this little one's far-away womanhood.

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"Poor wee soul!" she murmured—"poor wee, patient soul!"

On the way home both children fell asleep and did not wake until they were just entering Knightsbridge.

And then a wonderful thing happened from these slum-children's point of view. As the brougham rolled slowly through the Park a carriage met and passed theirs. And in the carriage sat a gracious, sweet-looking lady, whom Sallie told them was the Queen.

"But where was her crown?" inquired Bobby, in a voice that, for him, was rather subdued.

"It would be under her bunnet," said Jessie, after due consideration.

And with this conclusion both children were quite satisfied.

Mrs. Hamersley happened to be driving in the Park that afternoon, and chance brought her equipage close to that of Sara. The latter nodded, and called out cheerfully:

"Well, cousin, you see I've got a carriage-load to-day. I'm givin' them two little mites from Limehouse a breath o' fresh air, bless their 'earts!"

Several people heard, and turned to look with good-natured curiosity at Sara's little charges, who in their shabby and out-of-date garments seemed to have little in common with the fashionable throng that laughed and talked under the trees on that fair April evening.

But Selina Hamersley, with a deep flush of annoyance, pretended to be blind and deaf so far as her cousin was concerned—an ostrich-like proceeding which caused such of her acquaintances as were within earshot to shrug their shoulders somewhat contemptu-

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Two tired but happy little people were driven back to their respective homes in Limehouse, laden with toys and picture-books; and then Sara said:

"Sallie, I think we'd 'ave time to drive down to Lamb's Court. It's down near the Docks. There's a pore old sailor fellow there as I used to take odds an' ends of baccy and things to. And 'e'll think I've forgot 'im. He's bedridden, and lives alone, excep' for a niece as comes in in the mornin's to fix 'im up for the day. You needn't come out of the kerridge if you don't want. But it 'd be a treat to 'im to see you, I know, and 'is treats are few and far between."

"I'd like to go up to see him if you think he'd care about it," said Sallie, when Sara had given Thomas his instructions. "I always have a warm heart for old sailors and old soldiers."

Lamb's Court is not a cheerful place, but it was looking its best this evening in the gradually waning sunlight. A piano-organ was grinding out a merry waltz, and a small crowd of ragged dirty little girls were executing step-dances with more or less grace. One old woman in a grimy black bonnet and a ragged wreck of a dolman was waltzing solemnly round and round, still keeping hold of a perambulator containing a slumbering infant. The effect was curiously comic, and Sallie laughed aloud.

Sara flung a handful of silver among the children and delighted the organ-grinder by the gift of half a crown. The brougham had, perforce, stopped at the entrance to the court, and Sara preceded Sallie along the broken narrow pavement for about fifty yards, and turned into a dark doorway, and up three narrow flights of stairs. They were followed nearly all the

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way by the swarm of children, none of whom had at first recognized Sara in her new and fashionable attire. But now one agile urchin sprang past her on the stairs, and shrieked out excitedly:

"It's Sara — it's Sara Grub, as used to come to see old Joe Billington."

"Yus, it's Sara, sure eonough," assented that worthy good-naturedly, as she paused to take breath outside old Billington's door; "and a lot of little jays not to know it. But there, fine feathers makes fine birds. Now, run away, the lot of you, and make less noise, or I'll be 'ad up for creatin' a disturbance."

As she spoke, she tapped lightly at the door, and a strong old voice called out:

"Come in."

Sallie was surprised at the spotless cleanliness, as well as at the cheerfulness of the room.

There was but little furniture. The bed in which the old man lay, two chairs, a small table, and a model of a schooner under a glass case — that was all. But everything was scrubbed until it shone again.

Joe Billington himself, propped up with almost brilliantly white pillows, welcomed Sara with every evidence of hearty delight.

He was a broad-shouldered, fresh-coloured man of perhaps seventy or seventy-five, with keen grey eyes and a singularly pleasant smile.

"Come your ways in, Mrs. Grub," he said, with a strong Yorkshire accent. "You've been a stranger of late. I thought ye might 'a' forgotten old Joe, now that I hear you've come into money. But who be this strapping lass — eh? Who be she?"

"She's my cousin once or twice removed — Miss

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Sallie 'Amersley," said Sara, seating herself, and motioning to Sallie to do likewise.

"I'm pleased to see you, missie — I'm pleased to see you," said the old man, holding out a heavily veined hand. "It isn't often anything so fresh and pretty finds its way to Lamb's Court."

Sallie beamed upon him, and returned his hand-clasp heartily.

"Miss 'Amersley's young man — her fancy, they calls 'em out West," said Sara — "'as gone out to West Africa to an outlandish place they call Varaginda. Maybe you've heard of it, Joe, in your travels."

"Varaginda!" repeated Joe. "Eh, it's a God-forsaken place, it is — at least, it was when I knew it, a matter of ten or twelve years ago. But I dare say it's very different now, missie. So don't you be down-hearted. I knew of a mine out there — ah! that was a mine, now. Happen your young man may have heard of it. But if he hasn't, it 'ud be worth his while to be told."

"Oh, stow all that rubbish abaht mines," put in Sara. "Miss 'Amersley's young man 'as 'ad enough of mines to last 'im 'is life in this world. Look 'ere what I've brought — a couple of pounds o' the best shag."

"Eh, but you're a good soul!" exclaimed the old man, his eyes lighting up with pleasure. "You're a good kind soul, if ever there was one. This be a week of blessin's, sure enough. Will you fancy what came to me by parcel-post yesterday morning? A Kodak camera — no less. What do you make o' that? To think how often I've lay here, thinking of the snapshots I could take of the folks at the windows across

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the court, and the docks, and the shipping; but never dreaming of a kodak of my own. And no name saying who sent it. See, here it is, and here's the paper it was wrap in."

"Well, it's a beauty, anyhow," said Sara appreciatively. "It was odd, now, that it should come to you just as you was wantin' it, for things don't often 'apen that way."

"No. And it seemed as though it was to be," went on Joe, shaking his head contentedly; "for last night — happen it would be about nine o'clock — who should come in but Ben Wybrow, the watchmaker round the corner. And he's taken to photography in his spare time, and says it 'ud be a favour if I'd let him develop and print my snapshots after working-hours. Eh, and made a point of it, too."

If this arrangement was not new to Sara, she made no sign, but exclaimed heartily:

"Well, I never!"

"I've took my niece, Isabella," continued Joe, chuckling and rubbing his hands. "She's main pleased, I can tell 'ee. I'd like to snapshot you, Mrs. Grub, and missie here, if neither of you won't mind. You look amazing fine in them smart clothes, Mrs. Grub. And I'm main glad prosperity ha'n't changed 'ee. It do, sometimes."

Ultimately Sara and Sallie were snapshotted in various positions, to the keen satisfaction of the operator.

"Eh, but it'll shorten the days," he said, with a long sigh of satisfaction. "Only the Lord above knows how it'll shorten the days. Ah! and I forgot to tell ye, there came with the kodak a great box of plates —

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more'n I'll use in six months' time. I keep wondering and better wondering who could 'a' sent it. Mebbe one of the Royal Family theirselves. I 'ave 'eard of sech things."

"There — it's more'n likely," agreed Sara. "And if it was, you depend that when that set o' plates is used up, more'll follow where they come from."

"Ay, ay — maybe," said the old man. "Well, God bless them, I say, for lightening a pore old salt's days! I hears that you go into very grand circles, Mrs. Grub. So, if you should come across royalty, ye might just mention how it was appreciated."

"Lor', I don't 'ave no comin's and goin's with royalty," said Sara, with her comfortable laugh. "But my Cousin Sallie here, 'as been presented at Court, and chance it."

"Have you indeed, missie?" said Joe, much impressed. "Well, if you should happen to think of it, give my duty and humble thanks."

Sallie explained that she was not on intimate terms with the Royal Family, at which Joe was plainly a little disappointed.

"Joe's mad on singin', Sallie," observed Sara. "Couldn't you give 'im a bit o' song before we goes, dearie?"

"Eh, would ye?" Joe said eagerly. "That would be a treat, and no mistake. Do now, missie."

So Sallie sang not only one song, but three — prompted by Sara as to Joe's taste.

"Thank you kindly, missie," said Joe, in a shaky voice. "Never have I heard 'Tom Bowling' better sung. You have a sweet, sweet voice. Maybe you'll come again, and sing to old Joe?"

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"I will, with pleasure," said Sallie, and she meant it.

As they went downstairs again, the place seemed alive with children — white-faced, hollow-eyed, goblin children. Sallie's heart went out to them in pity. There seemed so many of them, and their future seemed so dreary.

Outside little groups of women stood at open doors watching Sara and her companion with a half-sullen curiosity and interest.

"Well, Sara Grub," said one of the first group they came to, as Sara paused beside her, "I wonder you can bring yourself to stomach Lamb's Court and such-like places, now you're 'and and glove with all the aristorkracy. Them fine clothes o' yours must 'a' cost abaht what'd keep a family. Straight — I never!"

"Don't you think I'm goin' to turn my back on old pals," returned Sara good-naturedly. "I can't 'elp my rise in position, no more nor I can 'elp my clothes. But I'm just old Sara Grub, right enough, and if any-one of you ever wants a 'elpin' 'and, you knows where to apply. For I ain't forgot some in Lamb's Court as looked after me when I was a very sick woman — ay, and brought coals in a tin biscuit-box to keep up my bit of fire when coals weren't any too plentiful. That's a matter of twelve year ago. But to show I ain't forgot it, I've give orders that every 'ouse in Lamb's Court is to 'ave coals free, all the year round, as long as Sara Grub's above ground."

At first this announcement was received in stupefied silence. Then one woman after another seized the speaker by the hand, and muttered awkward and incoherent thanks.

"You've the heart of a real lydy, Sara," said one

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thin, red-eyed creature, with wisps of rusty brown hair. "And money 'asn't spoilt you, as we all swore it would. It just shows that there ain't no knowin'."

Meanwhile Sallie had passed on to another group, where a pretty dark-eyed baby, in the arms of a depressed-looking young woman with an ugly cut across her forehead, was holding out its hands with crows of delight.

"Ah, what a pretty baby!" said Sallie, in so genuine a tone of admiration that the young mother forced a pleased smile. "Do let me hold it. It's a little girl, isn't it? Do you think she would come to me?"

"She is kind o' shy with strangers," the woman said. "But she do seem to 'ave took a fancy to you, miss. Well, I never!" she added, as Sallie gathered up the little mite in her arms in the masterly way that every baby knows and respects. "If she ain't a-cud-dlin' in, quite content-like."

Sallie, as I have said elsewhere, possessed the secret of unlocking hearts, and, moreover, of suiting herself to her company, wherever or whatever it might be. And in ten minutes or so she had practically won the approbation, and almost the affection, of this group of gaunt, poverty-ridden women, whose lives were so grey and monotonous.

"Bless her pretty little face and ways!" muttered one, as she turned to slap a screaming small boy on the doorstep behind her. "Not a 'apporth of airs about 'er, no more nor if she was one of ourselves."

Quite a crowd escorted the visitors to the carriage, which was duly inspected and appraised, Thomas grinning stolidly on the box the while. For his mistress's ways, and the visits she paid, and the kaleidoscopic



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classes of her friends, had ceased to surprise him.

As he drove off amid a chorus of shrill cheers, Sallie said:

"Cousin Sara, why didn't you tell old Joe that you sent the kodak? For I'm certain you did send it."

"Lor', my dear, it 'ud 'a' took away 'alf the pleasure. He's got it into 'is 'ead now that some big-wig's sent it to 'im. The gilt 'ud be all off if he knew it was nothink but old Sara."

"And I suppose you arranged that the young man — the watchmaker — should offer to develop and print them, you blessed old dear!" murmured Sallie.

Sara giggled shamefacedly.

"Get along with you, Sallie," she answered, putting up her hand to feel if her bonnet was straight. "You're as sharp as sharp, you are. There ain't no concealin' nothink."



Chapter XIII

EARLY the next afternoon Sara set off all alone, without, as she usually did, informing Sallie of her intentions.

She directed Thomas to drive to Sale Street, Paddington, and, dismissing him at the corner of the street, walked slowly down to No. 306, which was a dingy, three-storied house squeezed in between a saddler's and a tobacco-shop.

The door was opened by a tall woman of slatternly aspect and vinegary expression, who regarded Sara with a cold, suspicious eye, and said, in answer to an inquiry if Miss Alice Newcroft lived there:

"Oh, yes, she lives 'ere, right enough, and likely to die 'ere. Leastways, lying on a bed of sickness, and givin' no end of trouble to them as she owes nigh a month's rent to. And might you be any relation to 'er?" she added, eyeing Sara up and down disparagingly.

For the latter lady had dressed herself to-day with a simplicity that almost verged on dowdiness.

"No; as it 'appens, I ain't no relation," she answered tartly. "If I was, she wouldn't be lodgin' in a slum like this. But I'm one as means well by 'er, so show me which is 'er room, and look lively!"

"Hoity-toity!" replied the landlady, raising her voice after the manner of her class when incensed. "And who are you orderin' abaht, if you please, as

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if you was a lady mayoress? Go up and find your friend's room yourself. When you've got as 'igh as ye can, and most likely knocks yer 'ead agin a beam, that's 'er room — and won't be 'er room much longer, as 'e can tell 'er from me, unless she pays me what she owes me — a pale-faced, niminy-piminy hussy, coughing all night like a grampus, and keepin' honest folk from their lawful sleep."

"Get out of my way, you cold-'earted monster!" said Sara wrathfully, preparing to climb the rickety staircase. "A nice one you are to keep lodgers. It's a wonder they ain't frightened off the doorstep — straight it is."

The furious landlady, who was known to Sale Street as Mrs. Bamley, sent a torrent of abuse after Sara's stout little figure as it toiled upwards and vanished on the top landing. But Sara took no notice.

When, as Mrs. Bamley had indicated, she had just escaped knocking her head against a beam, she found herself before a door which was slightly ajar.

In answer to her knock, a voice replied:

"Come in."

And Sara went in, closing the door very gently behind her. The room was small, dark, and close, and very poorly furnished. On a narrow iron bed near the window lay the girl Sara had seen on the previous day at Madame Viro's. She looked very ill, and seemed to breathe with difficulty.

As Sara advanced into the room, the girl raised herself painfully on her elbow.

"Who is it?" she said. "I don't —"

Then she broke off in a violent fit of coughing.

"Don't you remember me?" said Sara, when the

paroxysm had spent itself. "You only saw me yesterday. Don't you remember Mrs. Grub, as asked for your address at that old imposin' swindler, Madame Viro?"

The girl struggled into a sitting position.

"It is very good of madame to come," she said. "Of course I remember madame; but this room is always so dark, and my eyes hurt me so —"

"Now, don't waste no time madame-ing me, my dear. You've got the 'flue, I can see, and got it bad. You poor little creature! A good thing I came. You look like a ghost this minute. What 'ave you 'ad to eat to-day?"

"I had some tea and toast," murmured the girl. "But I was not in the least hungry."

"Now, look 'ere, my dear," said Sara briskly. "That there 'ag downstairs — your landlady, I suppose — says you owe her nearly a month's rent. Is that so?"

"I'm afraid it is," faltered the girl. "I forfeited my last month's salary. I —"

"Yus; I remember," said the other quickly. "You spoiled some lace or somethink. Well, how much do you owe this landlady? What's her name, by the way?"

"Mrs. Bamley. I owe her — a good deal. It is only natural she should be angry, especially now that my cold has got so much worse. I ought to go to-morrow. But I feel so weak and queer —"

"Now, don't let's 'ave no beatin' abaht bushes. How much do you owe her?"

The girl named a sum that, to Sara's newly adjusted ideas of expenditure, seemed absurdly small.

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"Well, well, you lie quiet for a bit, and we'll soon put that right," said the older woman heartily.

As she spoke she opened the door, and called out:

"Hi! Mrs. Bamley, come up here. You're wanted."

A vicious flinging about of fire-irons from the presumable kitchen regions was the only answer.

Whereupon Sara banged with her umbrella upon a tin bath that stood on the landing, until heavy steps were heard on the stairs leading from the basement; and Mrs. Bamley's shrill voice indignantly demanded who that was "bringin' the 'ouse down," and almost in the same breath announced her intention of sending for the police.

"Oh, all right; send for the perlice and welcome," retorted Sara over the banisters. "I thought, p'raps, you'd like to see your rent, as you made so much fuss abaht. But if you don't want it, why, just stay where you are."

After a few minutes had passed Mrs. Bamley was heard heavily mounting the stairs, and presently her voice said ill-naturedly:

"Well, 'ere I am. What is it? It ain't no joke makin' a widow woman toil up ever so many flights o' stairs for nothink. Who are you, anyhow, makin' rows in respectable 'ouses, as 'asn't know anythink but peace all the years they've been 'ere, which is four, and chance it."

"Shut your 'ead," said Sara curtly, "and bring your book. I'm goin' to pay it."

"Lor,' you don't mean it!" ejaculated Mrs. Bamley.

"Yus, I mean it. Cut downstairs and make it out, every penny."

Mrs. Bamley, after a stupefied pause, retired with all speed. In an incredibly short time she returned with a dirty-looking book, containing the items of four weeks' rent, and a good many things besides — the product of her own imagination and greed.

But Sara only looked at the total, and, producing a purse from a mysterious pocket under her skirt, paid the amount in sovereigns; ordering Mrs. Bamley, in an ineffably superior manner, to keep the change.

Mrs. Bamley's change of front was marvellous and instantaneous.

"Which I'm sure I beg to be excused, ma'am, if I spoke sharp in the worry of the moment," she said, with a wavering smile. "But you may know 'ow it is when one sees everythink goin' out and nothink comin' in. And I allus felt like a mother to Miss Newcroft, as reminds me crool of a gal of my own who went wrong and died."

"Well, that's enough of that," cut in Sara ruthlessly. "Now, just you light a fire 'ere, and bring up a bowl of soup for this pore thing. I'm goin' out to see abaht 'avin' a doctor, as ought to 'ave been sent for before."

"Which certingly," purred Mrs. Bamley; "and if I'd 'ad my way, a doctor would 'ave been 'ere from the fust — even if I'd 'ad to pay for 'im myself. And 'ow are you feelin' now, my lamb?" she added solicitously, as she smoothed the bedclothes awkwardly. "Ah, well, you do remind me of my poor gal, Belinda. Them likenesses is very tryin'."

"Are you goin' to see abaht that fire and that soup?" said Sara loudly. "I suppose Miss Newcroft

THE OTHER SARA

ain't any more like your gal as went wrong and died than she was 'alf an hour ago? It's odd 'ow the sight of ready cash do alter ways and faces."

Then she bustled out and hunted up a doctor, whom she brought back with her.

He found the girl was suffering from influenza, aggravated by insufficient food and nervous exhaustion. With proper care, he said, she would soon be all right again.

"Now, my dear," said Sara, when he had written a prescription and taken his departure, "all you've got to think of is to get well. I'm goin' to take you in 'and, and look after you till you're on your feet again, and in reg'lar work."

"Oh, Mrs. Grub, I don't know how to thank you," the girl answered earnestly. "I can't tell you — I can't even give you an idea how grateful I am to you. I hope you won't think me very wicked, but I had made up my mind to — to kill myself. There seemed no place for me anywhere. And now that Mrs. Bamley is paid, I can easily manage. And as soon as ever I can pay you back —"

"We won't talk of payin' back in the meantime," said Sara. "Now, you listen to the plans I've thought of. I'm goin' now to 'ave this medicine made up, and send in some odds and ends that may be useful. And I'm goin' to send my maid, Mullins, to look after you a bit. For well I know that Bamley won't keep up the fire, or bring up a tray, unless there's someone to make 'er. And Mullins is a kind of pusson as if things ain't done, she'll know the reason why. But this is the plan that's come into my head: What kind of place did you think of takin' when you get abaht again?"

THE OTHER SARA

"I thought I would answer some dressmaker's or milliner's advertisement," the girl answered. "The only thing is, I don't know if Madame Viro would give me a reference. She never does, they say —"

"Oh, let Madame Viro go to pot!" said Sara brusquely, "and her references too. For the matter of that, I'd give you a reference, and chance it. But I've thought of somethink a sight better. Now, 'ow'd you like to set up in the millinery for yourself?"

The girl's face flushed deeply, but she did not speak.

"Now, don't you go thinkin' I'm makin' fun of you," said Sara quickly, "because I ain't. This is what I've thought of: I'm a plain woman, as not so very long ago kep' a antique-shop in Limehouse. And I've come into money unexpected — more than I could ever use lawfully if I was to eat till I bust, and was to wear dozens of costooms and bonnets all at once. So I think it's pretty plain that the Lord means me to look round and see if I can give a 'elpin'-and where it's wanted. And I've a fancy to take a nice shop in a good fash'nable part, and stock it, and put a nice, lady-like young gal like yourself in to see if she could make a fair livin' out of it. Now, the thing is, would you like to be that gal? I'd pay the rent for the fust three years, and arter that you ought to be able to pay it yourself. And I'd see that you 'ad plenty of customers. So what d'ye say?"

Poor Alice Newcroft lay looking at her new friend in wide-eyed, incredulous silence for a few seconds. Then she fairly broke down, and began to cry.

Sara patted her shoulder reassuringly.

"There, there now! You buck up, and think of all the fine new 'ats you're goin' to make. There's that

THE OTHER SARA

image comin' up to light your fire, I suppose. I want to 'ave a word with 'er before I go. I'll be back with Mullins early in the arternoon. So long."

And she went downstairs, meeting Mrs. Bamley half-way, laden with a coal-scuttle and a bundle of fire-wood.

"I'm goin' now," said Sara. "And I'm comin' back in the arternoon with a pusson to look arter Miss Newcroft. So you'd best get a room ready for her. I'll pay the week in advance. She may stay a week, and she may stay less, for, to say the truth, she's my lady's-maid — a thing I never 'ad till a matter of a few weeks ago. And 'ere's a fi'-pun note. You can keep what's left of it 'andy, when you've taken Miss Newcroft's room off it for a fortnight, and the other room for the week. Coals 'll be a added expense, of course; and any good turn you can do 'er you'd best do. If I don't recompense you for it later — and I may — the Lord will. Now I'm off. I'm sendin' in some medicine and bottled soup and things. You just see that they're decently warmed up and that."

About three in the afternoon she returned, accompanied by Mullins and a small dress-basket.

As the brougham stopped before Mrs. Bamley's exceedingly dirty doorsteps, Mullins said suddenly: "'Ave you forgot that to-morrer's the day you was to go down to stay with them there Americans?"

Sara paused, with her foot on the carriage step.

"Well, there," she said, "I 'ad forgot. But it won't make no difference. I've did my own 'air and took off an' on my own shoes for many a long day. So I dessay I can make shift to do it till after the Easter 'olidays."

THE OTHER SARA

"Humph!" sniffed Mullins, as Sara knocked with her umbrella on the door, which was guiltless of knocker and bell—"humph! I don't fancy I shall care about this job. But, 'owever, as you say, it's a charity, and as you're rememberin' it in the wages, Euphemia Mullins ain't the one to grumble at doin' 'er duty."

Mrs. Bamley greeted them with an amiable smile, and insisted upon preceding them upstairs to show Mullins her room, which was on the second floor.

"Which you'll be nice and 'andy for the pore young thing upstairs," she said, giving a twitch to the crooked blind. "Which I've allus looked on 'er as a child of my own, and wouldn't 'ave grudged 'er nothink, if I'd 'ad it."

When Sara had gone, a little later Mrs. Bamley said to Mullins, who was heating some soup over the kitchen fire:

"I was surprised findin' that your missus was one of the kerridge folks. No offence meant, but she don't just look it, do she?"

"Don't she?" sniffed Mullins, in her most acrid tones. "Does kerridge folk look different to other people, then?—or are they made different, with fewer legs, or eyes, or fingers, or what? I never sor it, if they are."

"Lor', Miss Mullins, you do take one up sharp!" said Mrs. Bamley. "I on'y meant to say that your missus —"

"My missus is a lady born, kerridge or no kerridge, clothes or no clothes," snapped Mullins, as she poured the soup into a basin. "And as for money, she could

THE OTHER SARA

buy up the whole of this street, I'll warrant, and never miss it."

"Lor'!" exclaimed Mrs. Bamley. "And I suppose she's just lookin' arter the pore young thing upstairs out o' charity — in a way of speakin'?"

"I dunno. You'd better arsk her."

"Ah, well, I'd 'a been a different woman if I'd been took up like that when in trouble and sickness, not to mention twins unexpected," sighed Mrs. Bamley.

"Humph! Some gets took up and some gets took down," observed Mullins oracularly, as she cut a piece of toast into strips. "It's accordin' as they deserve, no doubt. My missus 'as 'er 'ead screwed on pretty tight, and there ain't no gettin' round her with faked-up yarns abaht what's happened or hasn't happened. But in real trouble 'er 'and's a'most too ready to go into her pocket, as I've often told 'er. However, I ain't 'ere to waste time talkin' of what's none of my business — nor yourn, if it comes to that."

And the speaker whisked out of the kitchen with her tray, which she took upstairs in what she called "a couple of shakes."

When the soup and toast had been eaten, Mullins proceeded to put the room in order generally. And when dusk began to fall, the shabby little room, lit by the leaping firelight, actually looked cosy and home-like.

To poor lonely Alice life seemed suddenly to have assumed the aspect of a fairy tale. She pinched her arm severely several times to make sure that it was not a dream. And, to be sure, there was something singularly undreamlike about Mullins.



Chapter XIV

SARA was immensely impressed by Lillinghurst, the large estate in Essex which Silas Torrens had purchased from a hereditary legislator who had begun life by possessing more brains than money, and showed symptoms of ending it by possessing neither.

It was a beautiful old place, though very much out of repair; and Silas Torrens showed his good sense as well as his good taste by confining himself to restoration, without attempting improvements. True, there had been a question of the installation of electric light. But, after due consideration, Armine had decided that wax candles were much more romantic, especially as the house abounded in quaint, old-fashioned branch candlesticks, both of silver and bronze. Silas had bought the place as it stood — furniture, fittings, and all — and, to lovers of art, the house was full of priceless treasures.

Sara's bedroom was furnished in old oak, and the bed, which formed a species of island in the comparative vastness of the room, was a four-poster, and so high that Sara had to climb into it by means of a chair, and subsequently had a kind of nightmare, in which she thought she had fallen with a fearful crash upon the floor.

"Which it's my belief it's 'aunted," she confided to Sallie the next morning; "for I saw, as plain as plain, a kind of shape between me and the window; but

Then she suddenly began to i

"You dear, delightful Sara mean the Psychical Society, don'

"Well, well, my dear, I mean t and findin' out all about ghosts. do it on bicycles or tricycles don't it's my belief that a ghost of any itself be caught either by a bicyc

"Ghosts! Who's talking abou mine briskly. "They say there's you know, though I haven't seen it to. No, Mrs. Grub, you don't s just only fancy! Mrs. Grub saw a

"Well, I don't guess she'd se answered her father dryly, from the comfortable wicker-chair, where he wa ing three or four newspapers at one

Breakfast was over, and most were scattered about the broad ter the house.

"Oh, I don't know. Mr. Terren

bracelet with a little miniature set in it. And the miniature was the face of a young girl exactly like the ghost."

"You don't say!" exclaimed Armine, with a luxurious little shiver. "But how did they know she had been murdered and buried there?"

"I forget," answered Sallie. "But I know it was a true story, because it happened to an aunt of mine — I mean, she saw both the ghost and the miniature."

"I knew of a 'ouse near Limehouse," said Sara reflectively, "and every night in the month of July there came a whisperin' and a moanin' in one of the basement rooms. I've 'eard it with my own ears. And sometimes it 'ud be for all the world like a angry, mutterin' crowd, gettin' louder and louder, and then kind of dyin' away."

"Dear me! that is very interesting," said Professor Mangell, who was arguing with Terence Agnew upon the possibility of living upon a five-shilling weekly pension. "And has the matter been investigated — properly investigated, I mean?"

"Well, they've 'ad folks as is interested in spiritooal matters to come an' listen," said Sara. "But they couldn't make nothin' out of it, until an old gent with a ear-trumpet came and said it was the river undermining the outside wall. But everyone thought 'e was a ass, and 'im bein' deaf, and all. 'Owever, one night, sure enough, the river broke in, and drowned two children and a dog, and the rest of the people in the 'ouse was dug out lookin' more like rats than Christians."

"Ah, well, of course, that was hardly a ghost-story," said the professor, looking slightly disappointed.

live, and even to live comfortably a week. Now, don't you agree with me?

"Well," answered Sara, after a moment's reflection, "I don't know. I dessay it could be done by some of the folks doin' it for a time, 'cos there's a scrape and a pinch. You could get a pretty 'igh up it would be, but a reasonable six or three bob a week —"

"And that leaves two shillings a week for washing, and no end of other things to be done for the house-ence. "I tell you, the thing's impossible in the face of it. For one thing, where would you get the soap in?"

"Tobaccer don't come in at all, five bob a week," said Sara, smiling. "Those as must 'ave tobaccer — as would rather go without meat and drink than be a farden a week or so, or else go to the City though ye 'ave to go into the City rule."

"I don't see how it's possible, as you say," said Mr. Torrens, in his strong, kindly voice.

THE OTHER SARA

managed," said Sallie. "I don't see how they possibly could, unless they had a half-crown dinner on Sundays, and starved all the rest of the week."

"I knowed a old woman," said Sara — "a weakly old body she was, and couldn't do no more than keep 'er bit of a room clean, and 'erself and what clothes she 'ad clean likewise. And she 'ad a son as allowed 'er five shillin's a week. He was a decent lad, and I dessay would 'ave allowed 'er more if 'e'd 'ad it, which 'e 'adn't. She paid two and six for 'er room, and that left 'er, as Mr. Torrens says, about fourpence and a fraction a day. And she'd buy a 'apporth o' rice and a 'apporth o' milk one day — that'd be a penny — and 'ud make what she called three meals for that day. And the nex' day she'd buy 'arf a pint o' split peas, or two pennorth of bones, and a penny loaf, and make soup; and gen'rally two pennorth o' tea-dust, which larsted 'er for mebbe four days. And allus a penny cake o' soap, or a pennorth o' soft soap; for, as I said, she was one o' those folk as puts cleanliness a'most alongside godliness —"

"But her clothes," interrupted Armine. "Mercy on us! she must have had clothes."

"Oh, she 'ad clothes, in a way of speakin'," answered Sara dryly. "She put aside a 'alfpenny now and agin, and sometimes a penny; and there's places in Limehouse where you can sometimes get a plain skirt for 'arf a crown. She'd get that once in two years, and in another two year a bodice; and one bitter winter 'er son sent 'er a shawl. And I knew of a neighbour as give 'er a petticoat. The Lord above only knows what she 'ad underneath. Terrible little, I fancy. And once in a way sh'd buy a second'-and

"You can't afford no coal on
Sara answered, somewhat gruffly.
neighbours used to spare 'er a r
a gent give her a shillin' for p
which 'e'd dropped, and was too
she bought a sack o' coke with it
nigh three weeks."

"But how did she do her cook
with shocked eyes. "The poor
had coal for that."

"The neighbours used to let her
pan, and boil water or 'eat soup
Sara answered. "When the day
cold she would stay in bed, try
though it ain't easy keepin' warm
ket and a bed-cover you can 'most

"Oh my, how frightful!" said
eyes full of tears. "Mrs. Grub, do
that I can help her. It is too aw
pounds and pounds every day o
people like that should be both co

"She ain't cold now."

THE OTHER SARA

kind ever passed 'er lips all the time I knew 'er; and all the other neighbours said the same."

"Dear me, dear me!" said the professor, who was looking rather discomfited. "These things are certainly very distressing. I confess I had not taken into consideration the question of rent and firing and clothing. I was thinking mainly of the minimum amount of food absolutely required for the human frame."

"There's a lot of things as 'as to be considered when you're thinkin' of livin' on five bob a week," said Sara. "Arter all, it's just abaht 'arf what I understand gents pay for a pound of good tobaccer."

"It's a beastly, howling shame!" burst out Terence, who spent a good deal more than ten shillings a week on cigarettes alone.

"Ah, there's many things folks thinks a cryin' shame when they're young," observed Sara. "Arter a bit, folks gets a bit callous, I dessay. Arter all, I reckon it's easier to starve to death quietly by oneself than to see little children as you've brought into the world wasting away before your eyes for want — want of enough bread, let alone anythink else, to keep them alive."

"Oh, Mrs. Grub, don't! You do make me feel real bad," cried Armine. "I never thought of such things before. I thought the English poor-rates kept everybody with at least enough to live on."

"Ah, I've 'eard queer things, I 'ave abaht the distribution of poor-rates," answered Sara. "But there, we've 'ad enough of the poor and their troubles for one mornin'. I dessay we all does our best in our own quiet way to 'elp."

"Do we, you blessed old soul? I wish I could be

dug, happily and excitedly, until a scandalized gardener implored him.

In the afternoon the stratiphone unearthed a mass of mineral under the bed of a path on the lawn; and at this crisis he identified himself — a Scotsman of irascible temper.

"Man, ye manna howk amang us!" he most screamed. "Grant me patience, aff yer heed!"

"My good man, don't get excited, professor coolly. You don't know that those are indicated under those trumpery bushes!"

"Trumpery bushes!" echoed the gardener, with a wild eye the mournful expression of one long since passing into being forlorn and already wilted in the hot sun. "Oh, peety me! but things is a passin'."

"Now, now, my good fellow," he cheerfully. "Sentiment is all very well, and flowering plants are the essence of life, as everybody knows. But science is a

dications of minerals, sentiment must give way to science."

"That's all very well, professor," said Silas stolidly. "But if it's all the same to you, I object to your digging up my lawn. If there's mineral there, I don't want to know it. So just let my gardener put these shrubs right back, if you please, or there'll be ructions."

The professor emerged reluctantly from the hole he had dug, and dusted the mould from his clothes.

"Well, of course, it's your land," he said, with a regretful shake of his head. "But I warn you, you are missing a great opportunity. There are indications of marvellous wealth underneath almost every square yard of this property, and —"

"Man, I've more wealth than I know what to do with," was the good-humoured answer. "If I had any more, it would send me fair off my chump. So come right along and have a pipe, and let Macpherson put the lawn to rights."

The professor suffered himself to be led away, muttering and shaking his head discontentedly.

Later in the afternoon he confided his frustrated schemes to Sara, and that worthy soul felt sorry for his evident disappointment, though she viewed with disfavour the mole-like eruptions which marked his scientific progress through the grounds.

After some thought she evolved a plan which she laid before Sallie and Terence, and which was ultimately carried out with triumphant success. The plan was that a "faked" document — written on paper presumably discoloured by age — should be discovered and shown to the professor, the document setting forth that very valuable Roman remains were buried in a

other side of the river. He and the quartette set out in high glee on their way.

When they had gone pretty well on their way, Terence called the professor's attention to one of the windows, and carelessly pointed out something he thought was interesting.

"By Jove, professor!" he said, "something has been hidden away here, very interesting."

As he spoke, he brought to light a box, which, upon being opened, showed a discoloured piece of paper covered with handwriting.

"God bless my soul!" exclaimed Terence, snatching the box from the professor's hand. "This is probably of the greatest importance to me!" he continued, his hands shaking. "They could hardly hold the paper together. This is the most extraordinary thing — most extraordinary thing — most extraordinary thing — dear Mrs. Grub, you, as a lover of the old, are interested to learn that this is the most extraordinary thing — most extraordinary thing — most extraordinary thing —"

better hasten back. Really, this is one of the most interesting moments of my life."

"There mayn't be nothink in it, arter all," said Sara. "I knowed of some folks as dug and dug for buried treasure, and found never a sign of anythink but the lid of a old mustard-tin."

The professor laughed good-naturedly and condescendingly.

"My dear lady," he said, replacing the paper in the box with loving care, "this document is unquestionably genuine. Its discoloration and the faintness of the ink prove that beyond a doubt. There is no saying what priceless relics may have been hidden away for centuries in that unpretending field. Really you must excuse my hurrying on. But it is important that I should see Mr. Torrens without delay."

And he set off almost at a run, grasping the wonderful tin box tightly in his left hand.

"Poor old chap! I wonder if it was playing it a bit low down on him?" said Terence, stopping short in a paroxysm of silent laughter.

"Not it," answered Sara stoutly. "Why should he be left to dig up all old Torrens's flower-beds, and ruin all the lawns and shrubberies, as 'e's been doin'. Now, he'll be as pleased as Punch in 'is old nettle-field till it's time for 'im to go 'ome. Lor'! — as I allus say — it takes very little to please folks if you give 'em their own way."

And, as Sara had said, for the next few days there were few men happier than the professor, who rose early and repaired to his nettle-field with renewed hope and vigour every morning.

His expectations were kept alive by the finding of,

upon them, and exhibited them in
fication and gratification of various
sequently presented the whole to
well-known museum.

**And the conspirators kept the
kept it until this day.**

A GRAND bazaar — or, as the vicar's wife preferred to call it, a "sale of work" — was to be held on the Wednesday after Easter at Bexford, the nearest village to Lillinghurst.

Armine was to have a stall, and Sallie and Terence were to be her assistants. Sara had promised to buy indiscriminately at all the stalls, and she certainly kept her word.

She bought countless raffle-tickets, with no other result than obtaining a singularly hideous sofa-cushion. She dipped into divers lucky-bags, and thus became the richer by a nickel corkscrew and a tobacco-pouch. She bought toys, artificial flowers, blouses, work-baskets, and dressing-gowns. Finally, she paused panting, red-faced, and somewhat dishevelled, before a stall presided over by a tall, thin woman of noble birth but disagreeable temper, who appraised Sara at a glance, and, from a varnished point of view, found her wanting.

The lady from Limehouse had blossomed out to-day in the bright colours her secret soul preferred to all Madame Viro's "creations." Her bonnet was blue, and her gown was crimson. Her gloves were yellower than they need have been, and her sunshade was pale green.

"What's the price of them blue-and-white china

“Garn!,” snapped Sara.

“That is fifteen shillings,”
holder answered languidly.

“Garn!” replied Sara, with :
“If you get four and six for it
done well. Fifteen shillings!
more nor less than robbery.”

The person addressed attempt
ligerent customer by the use of l
eyeglasses.

But Sara was not to be frozen.

“Now, there’s no need to get
gaining her temper; “for if any
of china it’s Sara Grub — or ou
tons in my day, as anyone in and :
tell you. But never did I ever ’e
fifteen bob for a mug like that. ’
as common, and I only thought
it’s the very moral of one I ’ad a
on the mantelpiece in my parlour
got knocked down and smashed in
that I counted ’em. But I’ll wa

THE OTHER SARA

er — person, will you? I can't quite make out what she wants. But perhaps you can."

"I want that blue-and-white mug, for one thing," said Sara sharply. "And I want a little civility — which it seems it ain't likely I'm to get — for another. Who is that ill-mannered old party?" she added, addressing the girl in green.

"Oh, hush! She'll hear you," whispered the girl, who was a friend of Armine's, and had heard all about Sara and her eccentricities. "That is my aunt, Lady Westover. She is rather an impossible person. She literally glares people away from the stall. We've hardly sold a thing. I've heard of you from my friend Armine Torrens. You are Mrs. Grub, are you not?"

"Yus, my dear; Grub is my name, spelt with one 'b' though I've been advised to add another 'b' and a 'e.' Which I wouldn't do for wealth untold. Lor', if I changed my name like that, I'd feel as if the perlice was after me, nor nothing more nor less. And what might your name be, my dear?"

"I am Agnes Denham. I live in the mournful red house beside the river. It's a weird old hole. I sometimes feel exactly like Mariana in the Moated Grange."

"Agnes," interrupted Lady Westover's coldly sweet tones, "I am going to have some tea. Kindly see to things while I am gone."

"Thank goodness!" exclaimed Agnes, as her austere relative departed. "Do come and help me to sell, Mrs. Grub. I'm sure the moment people see your jolly, good-natured face they will want to buy things at once."

"I'll come with pleasure," said Sara, beaming like

THE OTHER SARA

the rising sun, as she bustled round to the back of the stall. "It won't be the fust time. Why, sellin's my trade — or was — as I dessay Miss Torrens 'as told you."

"Oh yes; she told me all about you. She's taken a great fancy to you, you know. And so has her father."

Then she added:

"Here's old Dr. Croton coming. Let's make him buy something. Dr. Croton, aren't you going to patronize my stall?"

A small, elderly man, with long, old-fashioned whiskers, stopped close to the speaker and smiled. His smile was delightful. It was a whimsical, boyish smile, and made one smile one's best in sympathy.

"To tell you the truth, I have been studiously avoiding your stall," he confessed frankly. "I — well your aunt is a very worthy and estimable woman, but, as a matter of fact —"

"As a matter of fact, you can't bear her," put in the girl briskly. "She has that effect, I must own. I myself should be awfully fond of her, if only she could be made all over again, and made quite different. However, be quick and make your purchases before she comes back."

"And this lady," said Dr. Croton, bowing towards Sara, who was rubbing her hot face vigorously with a pocket-handkerchief of enormous size — "is she an aunt of yours also?"

"No; she is a friend of the Torrens's. Let me introduce you. Dr. Croton — Mrs. Grub."

"Pleased to meet you," observed Sara. "Not that I'm very fond of doctors, though no doubt useful in

THE OTHER SARA

times of sickness. But they allus do give me a kind of nervous tremblin'. And I did know of a doctor down our way as recommended a 'ot bath to a pore old man as never 'ad 'ad a bath of no shape nor kind in 'is life — and 'e was eighty-two — and 'e died, and that was the end of 'im. And if it 'adn't been for that there doctor, 'e'd 'ave been alive now."

Dr. Croton looked at the speaker with amused, quiz-zical eyes.

"Now, Mrs. Grub," he said, "I was just going to ask the price of that little box of soap. But if you have such a prejudice against baths, perhaps your conscientious scruples won't allow you to sell it to me."

"Oh, I 'ain't got no scruples," was the catholic answer. "I quite approves of a bath or two occasionally. But when one's been a lifetime without, like the poor old soul I'm talking abaht, then I say it's a sin and a shame to force it."

"That box of soap is four and sixpence," said Miss Denham briskly. "It's a new French kind."

"Lor', it ain't nothink of the kind," declared Sara. "It's just like what I've bought 'undreds of times in the Commercial Road for twopence a cake."

"Why, Mrs. Grub, you are nothing of a saleswoman," laughed the doctor, as he produced the required sum, and pocketed his purchase.

Sara laughed heartily.

"Ain't I?" she chuckled — "ain't I? It's a pity, then, seein' I've been a saleswoman for many a year."

"Are you such an inveterate bazaarite?" he said.

"No; I 'ain't never seen the inside of a bazaar afore," Sara answered tranquilly. "But it ain't so long ago that I 'ad a shop of my own. And some-

think. But one can 'elp a little, t
to 'ave the chance."

"Do you know Professor Man
ton, looking interested. "He's a
old crank. I wonder what his lab
was collecting coal-scuttles."

Sara laughed.

"I can tell you what 'is fad f
few days," she said, "and that is
place for fust one thing and the
he's digging for Roman remains
hurst. He was up at four this m
when I larst sor 'im, 'e'd got wha
low the surface,' and on'y the top

"Most extraordinary person!"
used to know him very well in
good deal of money, I believe. I
with very little to show for it, as
seen."

"I s'pose 'e thinks, as the mor
please 'imself abaht spendin' it," c

Dr. Croton shrugged his shou

THE OTHER SARA

When Lady Westover returned she viewed Sara with her previous disfavour, and said coldly :

"I — er — think you are making a mistake. Buyers are expected to remain outside the stall."

"Keep calm," returned Sara, who was tying up a doll in silk paper with wonderful haste and neatness. "I'm goin' in a minute. There. I'm off now, Miss Denham. I'll arsk the clergy to take me to 'ave a cup of tea."

"The clergy," in the person of the Rev. Matthew Pamby, vicar of Bexford, turned a friendly eye upon Sara, whom he had met at Lillinghurst, and whose assistance he meant to ask in regard to the purchase of a peal of bells for his church.

So he responded with alacrity to her announcement that she was "dyin' for a cup of tea," and led her away to the refreshment-room.

"You have been exerting yourself in a most praiseworthy manner, Mrs. Grub," he said, as he found her a seat under an artificial palm. "I was just saying to my wife that you would make an ideal Church worker."

He was a very tall, stout man, with a heavy, red-brown beard, and long, narrow eyes. Sara's heart did not warm to him.

"Don't you make any mistake abaht that," said Sara, as she bit a semi-circular piece out of a substantial ham-sandwich. "I don't 'old with women doin' Church work, and never did."

"Dear me! I am very sorry to hear that," replied Mr. Pamby, shaking his head disapprovingly. "To one who has been so generously dealt with by Providence, I should have thought that any work connected

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with the Church would have appealed almost irresistibly."

"I guess Providence and me can settle our accounts without help from no one," replied Sara calmly. "Thanks; I'll 'ave another cup of tea. And less sugar, if you please."

Mr. Pamby took her cup, and presently brought it back refilled.

"It is good to think that we can satisfy our craving for food and drink when we so desire," he said, with a sigh.

"I 'ain't got no craving for drink, thank the Lord!" said Sara, munching a slice of seed-cake contentedly. "As for tea, it's a luxury the best in the land is prone to, and would no more call it 'drink' than I'd call Gregory's Mixture a stimulant. And any 'ealthy stummick would crave for its food, for you can't expect a fire to burn without coal."

"Nevertheless, we should strive to mortify our inclinations," murmured Mr. Pamby, who had had a substantial midday meal, and so rose superior to tea and bread-and-butter and cake. "And therefore, dear Mrs. Grub, should you not try to overcome your distaste for Church work, and become a willing and efficient helper of the — er — cause?"

"Lor'," said Sara, "if I didn't think as 'ow you were going to advise me to overcome my 'ealthy appetite, which I would not do, not if a Archbishop begged and prayed on 'is bended knees. And as for overcomin' my distaste for Church work, why should I? There's allus heaps of young women ready to prance around takin' Sunday-school classes, and dressin' up altars, and that, especially if the clergyman's unmar-

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ried, as I dessay you've found yourself. As for me, I'm past climbin' up step-ladders, and 'angin' wreaths on pulpits and readin'-desks. And as for teachin' a Sunday-school class — why, I've an idea I want a lot of teachin' myself before playin' school-mistress, and makin' a ass of myself for children to giggle at, which no doubt they would — and small blame to them."

"Ah, well, perhaps you prefer to be a passive worker," replied Mr. Pamby.

"And what's a passive worker, for goodness' sake?" asked Sara, flicking the crumbs from her skirt with a handkerchief as large as a small towel.

"Well, a passive worker is one who, when for any reason he or she is unable to take an active part in parochial duties, is willing to give a donation, according to his or her means, to any charity they may wish to patronize."

"I see," said Sara dryly. "Well, I don't see myself a passive worker. I don't give donations to no charities, I don't — never did, and never will. Anythink I may do — and I don't 'ave the chance of doin' much — is between the Lord and me, and ain't no business of no one's."

"I am deeply grieved to hear such sentiments from one of your undoubted pinnacle of prosperity," answered Mr. Pamby gravely.

"Oh, don't worry grievin' abaht me," was the cheerful answer. "And as for bein' on a pinnacle — well, I s'pose we're all that, in a way of speakin', for we carn't tell what kind of effect our daily lives 'as on our neighbours. For, when all's said and done, preachin' comes a long way behind doin'. You can al-lus stop to do a kind odd and end now and then,

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whether it's noticed by earthly eyes or not. But preachin's apt to get on the nerves, as well I know, 'avin' a uncle by marriage as got converted, and would 'ave prayin' fits in season and out of season; which couldn't but be inconvenient, especially on a washin' day, when everythink was in a muddle, and my aunt not in a fit state of mind, with a big washin' 'alf done, and 'alf not done."

"Ah, really!" said Mr. Pamby vaguely. "Was your uncle a clergyman, may I ask?"

"Not he. He was a very decent, respectable man in the ironmongery trade. Many a pot and pan I've seen 'im sell, though now in heaven above, as far as can be known. Now, I must be movin'. I've sat 'ere wastin' my time long enough."

"Well, Mrs. Grub," said Mr. Pamby, as he, too, rose to his feet, "I hope — I earnestly hope — that your newly found wealth may not take wings unto itself and flee away."

"Thank you kindly, sir. I don't think there's any special reason for thinkin' it will. And in return I'm sure I 'ope you won't lose your power of speech, nor the use of your limbs, or nothink of that kind, for as the prophet says, we all know how we are, but few of us know how we may be."

"And may I not have the pleasure of putting down your name for a small donation to our little fund for a new peal of bells?" said Mr. Pamby, with his most winning smile.

"Peal of bells!" repeated Sara. "Why, you've got a bell, for I 'eard it with my own ears. Ain't it good enough?"

"We have a bell, certainly," was the dignified reply.

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"But it has long been thought that a fine peal of bells would be much more fitting."

"What would it cost?" inquired Sara.

Mr. Pamby, in mental elation, named an approximate sum.

"And how much have you got towards it, up to now?" Sara continued.

Still more elated, Mr. Pamby named an infinitesimally small sum.

"Well," said Sara slowly, "I'll just make bold to give you —"

But Mr. Pamby interrupted her by seizing both her hands, and shaking them violently.

"Dear Mrs. Grub!" he exclaimed, "is it possible that you intend supplying the deficit? This is noble — generous — princely. How I have misjudged you —"

"Lor'!" ejaculated Sara, "what on earth are you talkin' abaht? I ain't goin' to supply no deficit. I was only goin' to say I'd give you a bit of advice. And it is that you think twice before ye spend such a 'eap of money on peals of bells, or any such nonsense. One bell's enough for one church, and sometimes too much when rung constant, and begun at all hours of the mornin'. So that's my advice to you."

Mr. Pamby bowed stiffly, and retired.

"An idjit," soliloquized Sara, as she shook out her skirts; "and, if I ain't mistaken, a whited sepulchre into the bargain."



Chapter XVI

OF course, everybody played bridge at Lillinghurst. And of this Sara highly disapproved, and did not scruple to say so.

When I say "everybody played bridge," I except Professor Mangell, and, of course, Sara herself.

The professor was resting from his antiquarian labours, having sprained his left wrist rather badly. But he was in the highest of spirits, having had a most interesting and wonderful find in the shape of an old bronze urn of undoubted antiquity, though doubtful period. The professor insisted that it was Roman; Terence thought it was Greek — not, as he frankly admitted, that he knew anything about it — but he remembered seeing an engraving of a Greek urn that looked something like it. Only Sara knew that it was neither, having paid fourteen shillings for it in a shop in the nearest market-town, on the distinct understanding that it was a clever reproduction, and no more.

However, the professor was pleased, and that was the main thing, as Sara told herself contentedly.

Most of the guests regarded Sara much as they might have regarded a newly imported savage — with a little additional interest because of her substantial income. To a certain extent she amused them, and her blunt criticisms on their ways and manners made them shriek with laughter.

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Among themselves they nicknamed her "Mrs. Noah." But not in the hearing of Sallie and Terence, or the Torrens's. Sara herself looked upon them all much as a big mastiff looks upon a set of unruly puppies, and classed them contemptuously as a "pack of senseless idjits," which a good many of them were, though not all. When they were not playing bridge, they played games which to Sara appeared deplorably childish and undignified. And they indulged in a freedom of speech which she designated as "down-right undecent."

The day after the bazaar was very wet and such of the house-party as were not engrossed by the bridge tables were romping in the hall, or carrying on violent flirtations in the various secluded nooks provided by deep window-seats, dim corridors, and cosily screened recesses.

"Well, I never did!" said Sara in a shocked undertone, as she sat heavily down on a chair near the professor's, close to one of the hall-windows. "In all my born days I never did! If that young married woman with tow-coloured 'air ain't settin, on a window-seat behind a screen, letting that young barrynit with eyes like a prawn 'old 'er 'ands, and all but kiss 'er! And 'er pore 'usband, as innercent as twins unborn, playin' cards all unbeknown."

"The way of the world, my dear Mrs. Grub — the way of the world," answered the professor, who was laboriously rubbing up his beloved urn with his uninjured hand. "After all, men should look more carefully after their wives than they do. Women are not responsible for what line of action they may take. With all due deference to you, as a woman, my dear

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Mrs. Grub, they are planned, intellectually and morally, on a lower basis."

"Lor'!" said Sara, who had a deep respect for the professor's learning, though she scoffed at what she called his "fads," "I thort as 'ow the idea was now that they was as good as men, if not better?"

"Pooh, nonsense!" said the professor. "That is a foolish fancy that will find its level in time. Women are slowly emerging from the comparatively Oriental state of subservience in which they have lived for so many years; and where, in my opinion, they would do well to remain. All this inflammatory talk regarding emancipation is, to my mind, very distressing and meaningless, but it is the inevitable swing of the pendulum from one extreme to another. It is like the æsthetic movement that freed us from rank Early Victorian ugliness. Its exaggerations have mercifully passed away, and left a general appreciation of beauty and good taste that is pleasing without being exciting."

"Well, you do talk beautiful, and so I've allus said," observed Sara, who was busy with a vividly coloured piece of knitting. "I've often wondered why you've never wrote a book."

"My good lady, I have no time," answered the professor, shaking his head. "What with my lectures and researches in various directions, I could not concentrate my mind on literature."

As he spoke he placed the urn upon a small table near him, and adjusted his spectacles carefully.

"I have been thinking very seriously of late," he said, after a silence—"very seriously. And I have come to the conclusion that I ought to marry."

"Well, and why not?" replied Sara. "I've many a time thought as 'ow you ought to. I'm sure if you 'ad a wife to see arter you, you'd look a 'eap smarter than you do. And I dessay there are some women as would be pleased enough."

"Do you think so?" said the professor earnestly. "Well, that is very gratifying. I have had doubts as to whether my age might not be a disqualification."

"Rubidge! You ain't a infant, of course. But I s'pose you ain't thinkin' of marryin' some young thing out of the nursery?"

"No, no; certainly not — that is to say, the lady I had thought of is of mature years. It would not be her first matrimonial venture —"

"You never mean to say you're thinking of marryin' a widder?" interrupted Sara. "Why, I thought you'd 'ave 'ad more sense. I don't 'old with widders, though I'm one myself — through no fault of my own."

"Dear lady," said the professor nervously, "there are — er — widows and widows. The one I am thinking of would, I am sure, be a fitting and sensible help-mate for any man. In short — that is to say — well, the lady I am thinking of is — can you not divine what my — er — diffidence makes it hard for me to put into words?"

Sara looked bewildered for a moment or so. Then she said, in a dismayed kind of voice:

"For gracious' sake, don't say you mean me!"

"I do indeed," he answered. "I have thought over it from every possible point of view. We are, I fancy, tolerably well suited to one another. I have an inde-

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pendent fortune, and so have you. We could travel about —”

“Now, professor, don’t talk such foolishness. If I was to think of marryin’ again — and I don’t deny I ’ave thort of it, for death or marriage is the only way I’ll be let out of livin’ with my cousin Seliner ’Amersley, once removed — well, as I was sayin’, if I was to marry again, I’d marry in my own class, and someone as ’as been brought up the same as me. You know very well, professor, that my ways of speech would affront you and your friends. And, moreover, I carn’t ’elp fancyin’ that if I’d been a pore woman — you see, I’m speakin’ plainly — it wouldn’t ’ave come into your ’ead to arsk me.”

The professor reddened slightly.

“Well,” he stammered, “of course our united incomes would enable us to live on a much more luxurious scale, especially in travelling. And, of course, I should not influence your expenditure. I should be quite willing to allow you to spend the greater part of your income just as you pleased —”

“Well, yus — I rather fancy you would,” put in Sara dryly. “But it ain’t come to that, exac’y. I don’t want to ’urt your feelin’s, professor, for we’ve allus got on well, and I ain’t forgot ’ow you used to come and ’ave your chat in my old place in Limehouse. But I reely can’t see my way to marryin’ you, and that’s straight.”

“Well, well, never mind,” answered the professor philosophically. “Only I really think we should have made a very happy couple. However, you know best, of course. And this little episode need not make any difference in our friendship.”

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“Lor’ no! why should it?” answered Sara. “You’ve arsked me, and I’ve said as ’ow I couldn’t, and there’s an end of it. Arter all, maybe you’ll be better single. For wives has an upsettin’ way at times, especially when a man ain’t used to ’em. I knew a man — a plumber to trade ’e was, and never ’ad no thought of marriage till ’e met a slip of a gal as came from nowhere, in a way of speakin’, and took sech a fancy to ’er as nothing would serve ’im but marriage. Well, they got married, and six months later ’e’d ’ave give ’is eyes to be single again. And well I know, for ’e told me. I allus did say there was too big a difference in age, for ’e was fifty-two, and she was not much more nor twenty. So there you are. She wouldn’t submit to ’is old-fashioned humdrum ways. And ’e ’ad no patience with ’er gallivantin’ and spendin’ money ’ere and money there. And what was the end? Why, she ran off with a postman of ’er own age. And ’er husband ’anged ’isself to the bedpost one dark December night, and not found for two days arterwards. To be sure, the postman knocked ’er abaht crool, and gave ’er many a black eye. But there, that’s the way of men, as I ought to know, ’avin’ been married in ’aste in early youth, and repentin’ at leisure not so many months later. Ah, marriage is a gamble, sure enough.”

“Well, perhaps that is so,” admitted the professor meditatively — “perhaps that is so.”



Chapter XVII

MISS MULLINS, it must be confessed, gave herself not a few airs during her sojourn in Sale Street. She was very amiable to Alice, whom she considered "a pleasant, civil-spoken little creature," and spared no pains to make her comfortable. But she regarded Mrs. Bamley as a mortal foe. And the latter was undeniably afraid of her.

"I'm expectin' a friend of mine — a young man — to-night, Mrs. Bamley," she said loftily one afternoon, when she had assisted Alice to dress, and left her comfortably installed by her bedroom fire with a book and a kitten for company. "So I'll be obliged if you'll let me 'ave the use of your downstairs sittin'-room to receive 'im in."

"Oh, certingly, Miss Mullins. Is he your young man, may I arsk?" answered Mrs. Bamley, in a conciliatory tone, and with a slight emphasis on the possessive pronoun.

"I said 'e was a young man. I didn't say 'e was my young man," snapped the other. "Whether 'e wants to be or not is another matter, of course."

The young man in question was Graves, Mrs. Hamersley's footman, who arrived in due course, clad in a neat pepper-and-salt tweed suit, with a bright blue tie, and his hair smoothly plastered down under a brown bowler hat, which latter he kept on just long enough

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for his hostess to observe its obvious newness, and then bestowed it carefully under his chair.

"I hope I see you well, Miss Mullins," he said, somewhat diffidently; for he had long ago found out that Miss Mullins's moods and temper were alarmingly uncertain.

"Thank you kindly, Mr. Graves, I'm as well as I can 'ope to be, waitin' day and night and 'and and foot on a invalid. Not but what she's a nice little thing enough, and as near bein' a lady as anyone can be without bein' one. But I ain't used to it, and feels it accordin'. However, Mrs. Grub is comin' 'ome to-morrer, and I dessay will want me almost immed-ate."

"The house 'asn't been the same without you, Miss Mullins," observed the young man, after a pause.

"Oh, get along! When is your missus comin' 'ome? I s'pose she's bin in Paris, or some such foreign part?"

"She's to be back on Sat'd'y night. I hoped as how you'd honour me, Miss Mullins, by havin' a even-in' at the Exhibition when it opens next month. Of course, I'd stand all the exes, and think it an honour, too."

"Time enough to talk abaht the Exhibition when it's opened," Miss Mullins answered tartly. "We may all be dead before then. If you suggested a theatre or a music-'all, I don't say as 'ow I'd say no."

"Whichever you like, Miss Mullins; only, regardin' the Exhibition, I thought as how I'd better speak in time, knowin' that lots of other young fellows would be waitin' for the chance," said Mr. Graves tact-
fully.

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"Well, well, there's somethin' in that," observed Miss Mullins, in a mollified tone. "You're a young man with eyes in your 'ead, I will say."

"Oh no; nothin' more than usual," Mr. Graves answered, with a deprecating smile.

After which obviously truthful remark he was silent for quite two minutes.

Presently he said:

"It must have knocked your missus, rather, comin' into all that money quite sudden-like."

"Oh no," was the lofty answer. "She 'as plenty of nerve, 'as my missus. She takes things as they comes — the same as myself."

"I suppose, now, she gives you a fairly good wage?" ventured Graves.

"There's no 'arm in your supposin' anythink you like, Mr. Graves. My missus gives me what she can afford, and what satisfies me. And the only people concerned is ourselves."

"Well, no offence, miss. You do catch one up so."

"Unprotected females 'as to catch people up, and keep them in their place," observed Miss Mullins. "I know very well what your idea is, Mr. Graves. If I'm supposed to be 'avin' a good wage and savin' money, you might see your way to makin' me Mrs. Graves, I dessay. But I'm not goin' to tie myself up to keep company, nor even walk out, with no special young man in the meantime. I mean to have my fling, and go about a bit, before I descend into family life."

Mr. Graves looked pensive.

"Others have come forward," went on Miss Mullins slowly and impressively. "The afternoon postman

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for one, and one of Carter, Paterson's young men — not to speak of our own butler, Mr. Parker."

"Well, he has a nerve," replied Mr. Graves hotly. "Why, he's fifty, if a day. And the idea of makin' up to a woman half his age — why, it's scandalous!"

Miss Mullins, who was quite forty-five, smirked and looked pleased.

"Well, I will say you take my fancy more than any of 'em," she said, rising to intimate that the interview was over. "For one thing, you're near about my own age — nearly twenty-seven, I think you said? — and you certainly 'ave refined manners. So we'll see, as times goes on. Good-night."

"Good-night, miss. I wish all young ladies had your sense — as well as personal attractions."

Miss Mullins bowed graciously, and rang for Mrs. Bamley to show him out.

At which supposed evidence of undoubted gentility the young man was mightily impressed.

"She certingly is no beauty, and more nor a bit older nor me!" he soliloquized over a solitary pint of beer at a neighbouring public-house. "But with a bit saved, and friends in high places, and a commandin' way, a few years ain't neither here nor there."

* * * * *

On the following day Sara came home; and one of her first expeditions was to Sale Street. As the day was warm and sunny, she insisted on taking Alice to drive in the Park, and from there to inspect some premises near Oxford Circus, which she had seen advertised in the *Morning Post*, and thought would be specially suitable for the project she had in view.

They went first to the agent's and got the keys, also

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particulars about the rent, and other matters; then drove off, in subdued excitement, to inspect the "desirable set of rooms, suitable for business premises, with bijou dwelling-suite attached"—*vide* the advertisement.

It was a compact little place, entered from a narrow doorway, enamelled in white, and opening upon a steep staircase, leading to two fairly sized rooms, each with two large windows. The front room would do splendidly for a showroom, Sara said, and the other for the workroom.

The next floor contained two smaller rooms—also a tiny kitchen and a tinier bathroom.

"Well, my dear, what do you think of it?" said Sara, beaming upon her companion.

"Oh, Mrs. Grub," faltered the girl, "I can't believe it. It seems so much too good to be true. And the rent—I couldn't let you pay so much for me. You know nothing about ~~me~~—"

"Now, don't be a little jay! If you're pleased, I am. I like the place myself," said Sara complacently.

"And it's in fairly good order, and there ain't no denyin' as 'ow it's situated most convenient. So we'll drive back to that there agent's and fix it up at once. And we'll arrange about the fittin's and 'angin's and other odds and ends at the beginning of the week. Now, don't cry, my dear, or I shall think you ain't 'appy."

"But I am," cried Alice hysterically. "I am so happy I feel certain I must be dreaming."

"Oh no, you ain't," laughed Sara good-naturedly. "You're wide awake enough; and you'll have to be wide awaker still, when you'd got started as one of the

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swaggerest little milliners in London. What name are you goin' to 'ave? It'll 'ave to be Madame something or other, won't it?"

"I thought Madame Eglantine would be pretty," suggested the girl hesitatingly. "What do you think?"

"Lor', my dear, I don't know. I dessay that would do as well as anythink else. We'll see what Miss 'Amersley says. And another thing I was thinkin' is this: we'll get the livin'-rooms ready first, and you can move from that Bamley woman's. And Mullins 'll look out for some decent young gal to cook and keep things tidy. For you'll want all your time to see customers and do up your 'ats. Later on, I expect you'll be able to 'ave an assistant or two. But at first you won't 'ave so very much to do. Now, let's go and 'ave a snack of somethink to eat. Why, you do look a different gal. I declare if you 'aven't got quite a colour."

"I feel as if I could sing with joy," said Alice, her eyes dancing. "The very first hat or bonnet I make shall be for you, and the next for Miss Hamersley. You shall never regret your wonderful goodness to me, you will see. I shall do you credit, and try to be such a success that you will be quite proud of me one of these days."

"Yes indeed; we'll be 'aving all the toffs crowdin' each other to 'ave their 'ats made by Madame Eglantine," said Sara, as she cautiously descended the narrow stairs.

Chapter XVIII

It was the middle of May, and "Madame Eglantine's" show-room was gay with dainty hats, toques and veils.

Madame Eglantine herself, smart, erect, clear-eyed and clear-skinned, was moving about the room, giving a touch here and a twist there, in expectation of possible customers; for the show-room was to be open to-day to the public.

It was still early, not yet half-past ten, and the May unshine crept in between the cream silk blinds, and lay in long, thin, golden shafts on the mossy green carpet.

Alice Newcroft looked round her new domain with a sense of proud proprietorship. Everything certainly looked very fresh and tempting. Alice was a born milliner, and tossed the trimming of a hat into loving conjunction with its shape as easily as a bird sings. She felt very happy and hopeful and grateful.

The tiny bedroom and sitting-room upstairs — though furnished, by her own choice, with almost severe simplicity — formed a haven of rest and peace to the lonely girl, after her long, weary experiences of cheerless lodging-houses and landladies of varied ideas of justice and honesty. A small cockney maiden, imported by Mullins from Limehouse, was very busy and important upstairs, making painstaking efforts to perfect herself in housework and plain cooking.

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Verily, to Alice Newcroft the "lines had fallen in pleasant places" at last.

Suddenly she heard the jingling jerk of a hansom stopping at the kerb below, and peeped through the blinds just in time to see a small, consequential girl-child alighting with grave importance, and handing the driver his fare. Presently the door downstairs opened to the whirring of the electric bell, and light steps sounded on the wooden stairs. Then from between the green velvet curtains at the doorway a little girl came tripping, a tiny figure clad in brown holland.

"Good-morning," said the new-comer in a clear, childish treble. "I suppose you are Madame Eglantine?"

"Yes, I am Madame Eglantine," answered Alice, smiling down into the earnest, childish eyes.

"Well, I am a relative of Mrs. Grub's," said the little one, seating herself, and smoothing out her short skirts. "I heard Mrs. Grub and my sister Sallie speaking about you, and I thought I'd like to come and be your first customer. I dare say you're feeling rather nervous, aren't you?"

"Yes, I am, a little," confessed Alice. "Then, you are Miss Hamersley's sister, I suppose?"

"Yes, I am Anne Hamersley. I'm really only Sallie's step-sister, of course. But I'm so fond of her I always feel as if she was my real sister. She and Mrs. Grub are coming later on. Now, have you any hats that you think would do for me? Not anything very expensive, you know, because I can't afford it. What is the cheapest thing you have? I've only got ten and sixpence, you see."

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Madame Eglantine smiled, and her smile was very tender.

"It was very sweet of you to think of being my first customer," she said gently. "I think I could let you have a very nice hat for about five and sixpence."

"Oh, come, now, none of that," was the sharp reply; "you're just cutting down the price because I said I hadn't much money. Perhaps I'd better look round and see what you have. Of course, if you haven't anything as low as ten and sixpence, I could borrow the money from Sallie. I'll get my next month's allowance in a fortnight."

"Perhaps you would like to open an account?" said Madame Eglantine very gravely.

But little Anne shook her head.

"No; I'd rather pay for it," she said. "And don't you begin offering credit to all your customers. You'll never make any money if you do. And as for mother, she'll order three hats a month, and never pay for a single one. And if you keep sending in your bill, she'll come and cheek you, and threaten to get her hats somewhere else. Of course, this is between ourselves."

As she spoke, the little lady jumped off her chair, and made a circuit of the show-room.

"I like this burnt straw with the bunch of poppies," she said, after a prolonged survey. "I might try it on. You see, it isn't everything that is becoming to me, owing to my being so unfortunately plain."

The burnt straw with poppies, however, proved very becoming, and, singularly enough, was only ten shillings.

Anne decided to keep it on, and have her old one

sent home. She then produced a small green purse, from which she took four half-crowns.

"I'd better have a receipt, hadn't I?" she said. "It's always safer, and it prevents mistakes."

Madame Eglantine took the money, and wrote out a receipt, which Anne inspected with much interest.

"Is this the very first one you have used?" she asked.

"Yes; you are my very first customer."

"Well, I hope I'll bring you good luck. Have you known Mrs. Grub a long time?"

"Oh no; only a very short time. But she has been kinder to me, and done more for me, than anybody I have ever known," said Madame Eglantine, as she hung a gossamer veil over a hat of grey plumes.

"She's an awfully good sort," observed Anne, looking at the back of her new hat by means of a hand-mirror. "You've no idea how kind she was to our governess, Miss Cave. And I believe she does ever so much good with her money. Mother hates her, and says she looks like a cook or a charwoman. But what does it matter what you look like if you're so good that everybody can't help liking you?"

Then she added coaxingly:

"Madame Eglantine, I do wish you would let me stay for a bit, and watch the people coming in. I love to watch people trying on things; they look so silly."

"You may stay as long as you like, my dear. Only I'm afraid you will find it very tiresome."

"If I do I'll go home," was the frank answer. "Shall you put on a French accent?" she added.

"Certainly not," replied Alice, with a short, amused laugh.



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"Oh, well, I didn't know. You were a Madame Viro girl, Sallie said, and they generally did. I've heard them, when I've gone with mother or Sallie to have things tried on. I don't remember seeing you there."

"I wasn't there very long," said Alice, feeling curiously drawn towards her quaint little "first customer." "And I don't think she ever liked me very much."

"Oh, well, never mind. She's an old humbug, and I detest her. Oh, I say, here's somebody coming. I'll be as still as a mouse."

The new-comer was a tall, thin old lady, with a very obvious toupet of a light golden hue. She was lame, and walked with a silver-headed ebony stick.

"Good-morning," she said in a shrill, unnatural key. "Miss Torrens recommended you very highly. So I promised to look in. What have you? You are French, I suppose? Vous-êtes française, n'est-ce pas?"

"No; I am a Scotswoman," answered Madame Eglantine, with a slight bow.

"Humph! I don't know that I think much of Scots' fashions. And yet, I don't know. I have known well-dressed Scotswomen. As a matter of fact, that's a well-cut gown you've got on."

"What can I show you?" asked Madame Eglantine, colouring slightly.

"I want half a dozen toques," said the old lady, "One black and gold, and one entirely composed of forget-me-nots; the others I can leave to you. There's a pale blue chiffon; that would suit me, I fancy. I'm

THE OTHER SARA

only thirty, you know, though I may look more. You know who I am, of course? You must have seen my portrait in most of the fashion papers. I'm Mrs. Galawex Effingham de Wardle."

As she spoke she turned the blue chiffon hat round and round, and finally tried it on. It was sadly unsuited to the withered old face; but Mrs. Galawex Effingham de Wardle, who must have been eighty at the least, seemed quite satisfied.


"I'll take that," she said, smiling coquettishly at her image in one of the long mirrors. "How much is it? Three guineas? Very reasonable. I paid five for the one I'm wearing. Now, when can I have the others?"

"When does madame require them?"

"I must have the black and gold to-morrow afternoon. The others will do any time this week. Send the bill with them. I'm most particular about paying for everything as I get it. Oh, you have veils, I see. Send me a dozen, assorted. Good-morning. If I find your work satisfactory, of course I shall recommend you to my friends. Don't forget the bill, and tell the messenger to wait for the money."

When she had departed, little Anne said:

"If I were you, I'd charge at least four guineas for the other five toques. It'll be all the same to her. She's quite rich, and she really does pay ready-money, because I've heard Armine Torrens say so. And she knows heaps of people. I say, you're getting on, aren't you? Why, it isn't twelve o'clock yet, and you've sold seven hats already. And I know there's lots of friends of Sallie's and Armine Torrens's coming



THE OTHER SARA

in the afternoon. However, I was your very first customer of all," she added, nodding her head complacently. "But I'm going home now. I'll p'raps come back in the afternoon."



Chapter XIX

ONE Saturday afternoon, when Sara was just about to pay her weekly visit to Limehouse, Terence appeared suddenly at the carriage-door, and asked if he might accompany her.

"Git along with you," said Sara, smoothing down her voluminous skirts. "What would a smart young feller like you do runnin' abaht the East End?"

"Sallie says it's really interesting," answered Terence, as he took his seat beside Sara, and told Thomas to drive on. "I want to see all these people who are socialists, and know how to live on next to nothing a week, and things like that."

"I don't know as 'ow they'd care to be made a peep-show of," said Sara dryly. "But if you specially wants to come, well, I ain't got no objections. As for Sallie, they all think no end of 'er. She's so sweet and affable-like."

"Well, but I can be sweet and affable-like, too, upon occasion. You know I can, Sara. You've spoken of it yourself. Anyway, I'm going to be a wingless saint to-day, you'll see."

Mrs. Claptry, as usual, was curtsying deeply and repeatedly in a forest of tables, chairs, baths and carpets. Behind her rose dim vistas of china, glass, and picture-frames, varied by bird-cages.

She addressed Terence as "my lord," which delighted him immensely, and dusted one chair after



THE OTHER SARA

another for him to sit upon. But he preferred to wander about inspecting the extraordinary collection of things, ancient and modern, which were piled one upon another, almost as high as the ceiling.

He bought a queer old "eagle-table," which Sara told him was worth "pounds and pounds," though she would not let him pay more than its ticketed price of thirty shillings. He also bought two queer old medals, and paid a shilling for the two. These purchases completed, they proceeded to "Skinners'" to have tea.

At Skinners' were assembled the Bassetts, John Fergus and his daughter, and the suffragette, Ada Hobart — almost the identical company that had assembled on the day that Sara and Mullins had had tea there more than two months ago. For now it was the beginning of June.

Terence was presented by Sara to each of the guests in turn, beginning with Mrs. Skinner. He sat next to the latter at tea-time, and insisted on helping her to make tea, to her mingled gratification and confusion.

"You do remind me of a nephew of my own, as was drowned years ago," she said, when tea had been handed to all, and sandwiches and cold ham were circulating freely. "The same kind of wavy hair and the same pretty ways. Ah, deary me, how time flies."

"I know I have wavy hair," replied Terence, after politely refusing bloater-paste; "but do you really think I have pretty ways? If you do, I wish you would tell Mrs. Grub so. She's awfully down on me, you know — snubs me no end."

THE OTHER SARA

"Lor'! she must have a nerve," said Mrs. Skinner. "But, there, I allus said Sara Grub fears neither King nor commoner. She's a wonderful woman, Sara Grub is."

"I quite agree with you," acquiesced Terence. "But I'm most awfully afraid of her, you know. I'm rather a shy, nervous fellow — I am, really."

"Well, I never!" exclaimed Mrs. Skinner. "You don't tell me!"

"I suppose you haven't heard our news, Mrs. Grub?" put in Ned Skinner's cheery voice across the table. "Or rather Mr. Fergus's news? Strike me, if 'e 'asn't come into a fortune of four 'undred a year."

"Hoots, Skinner, what's the use o' talkin' of a fortin of four hundred a year to a leddy with ten thousand a year?" said John Fergus, with a pleasant laugh. "Ye mak' me think shame o' havin' mentioned it. But I'll no deny it seems a heap o' money to me."

"It's a very tidy sum," said Skinner; "and there ain't a better man in London for it to come to."

"Right you are," agreed Sara heartily. "And I'm sure I wish you all joy in the spendin' o't, Mr. Fergus. For I won't deny there is a joy in it, the more when one's been kep' short for years previous."

"And what abaht them as is kep' short all their lives?" growled Jim Bassett. "What abaht them as starves that other folk may bust, and gasps with thirst that other folks may swill, and works their fingers to the bone that other folk may lie abed at ease? What abaht them? What abaht those as dies in 'erds that other folks may live and prosper on their remains? Tell me that."

"This is very interesting," said Terence, leaning

but I quite thought that in so
'rich' and 'poor' were not used
the idea was that every man
round, from a financial point of
bour?"

"I don't know nothink about
view," muttered the other. "I
well off as the greatest in the
in the land to be no better off than

"A very natural wish on your part,
Terence. "But from the point of view
in the land, I think the case is clear

"Don't you take no notice of what I
put in Mrs. Bassett acidly. "I don't
sake o' talkin', and 'alf the time
'e's talkin' abaht. 'E'd be the
think of his with others, I know
when 'e won a guinea in a contest
ought to 'ave my share, as I'd
if you please; 'e said it was 'is
goin' to divide up with no one.
'ome, say I."

THE OTHER SARA

'ome and look arter the 'ouse, and keep theirselves to theirselves."

"We know abaht common justice and fairness, if we don't know abaht socialism," retorted his wife. "Folks as is too lazy to work wouldn't be any more good with a bit o' money, nor without."

"And as for stayin' at 'ome and lookin' arter the 'ouse," cut in Sara, "accordin' to all accounts there won't be no 'ouses to look arter. We're all to live in a kind of barracks, and 'ave our food ladeled out to us, same as in the workus. Seems to me the workus is a very good example of what socialism's goin' to be. We'll all 'ave to wear uniforms without a tag o' difference, for fear of breedin' envy and malice. A pack of senseless rubbidge."

"Oh, deary, deary me!" said Mrs. Skinner in a tone of dismay — for her neat little home was her pride and joy — "and is that what socialism is? Oh, Ned, promise me you won't never let yourself be tempted to be one of them."

"Never you fear, mother," he replied cheerily. "What I have I'll stick to, excep' what I share with you. 'Ave some s'rimps, and don't let your 'eart go down."

"If socialism comes to stay — and come it will," persisted Jim Bassett doggedly — "folk won't be arsked if they'll like dividin' up things or not. They'll 'ave to do it, and charnce it."

"When women get into Parliament," put in Miss Hobart unexpectedly, "they won't 'ave no such nonsense as everybody 'aving share and share alike of everything. I've been talkin' things over with a

THE OTHER SARA

friend of mine as has made a study of the subject, and he says under socialism we'd be under the worst form of slavery."

"I guess your friend's a bloomin' ass," observed Bassett uncivilly.

"Oh no, he isn't, Mr. James Bassett," was the fiery answer. "He's a retired tobacconist, and has close on five hundred a year."

"And Miss Hobart's walkin' out with 'im," called out Irene Bassett excitedly. "And 'e giv' me a tanner, 'e did. He's a real gen'leman, anyway."

Miss Hobart coloured, and hastily helped herself to watercress. And Sara said jocosely:

"Now, now, Irene, don't you go lettin' no cats out of bags. If Miss 'Obart 'as a young man, and if 'e means all right by 'er, she'll tell us all in good time."

"Well, as so much has been said," simpered Miss Hobart, "I may as well confess that the gentleman I'm speaking of has been after me for some time, and only yesterday made me an offer of marriage."

"Well, well, better late nor never," observed Mr. Bassett disagreeably.

Miss Hobart tossed her head, but made no verbal answer.

"Weel, weel," said John Fergus, "I'm aye glad to hear of young weemen bein' well settled. And five hundred a year is no to be sneezed at. We all wish ye joy, lassie, and only such troubles as'll keep ye chastened."

Miss Hobart responded with a graceful bow to the ensuing shower of congratulations.

"I suppose, Mr. Bassett," she said, turning to that worthy, who was sitting leaning back in his chair,

with his hands in his trousers pockets —“ I suppose you would advise my future husband to half his income with you?”

“ I’d advise your future ’usband’s future wife to keep a civil tongue in ’er ’ead, or maybe she’ll wish she ’ad,” was the savage answer.

“ Jim Bassett, there’ll be no squabblin’ and worryin’ at my table, if you please,” said Skinner, rapping sharply on the table with his fork. “ If you can’t speak as a gentleman to a lady, you can’t be no guest of mine.”

Meanwhile gentle little Mrs. Skinner was confiding to Terence minute details of her son Ned’s early childhood, his ailments, and his manifold virtues.

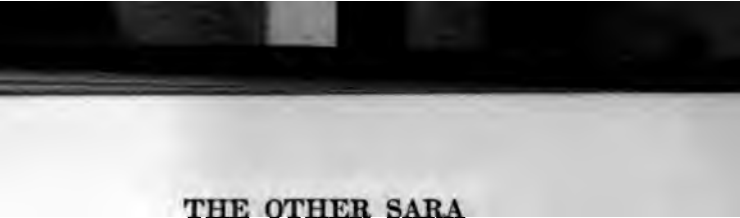
“ And never even so much as thought of gettin’ married and settled, like so many young men,” she said; “ and all on account of his mother. ‘ No, mother,’ ’e ses: ‘ I ’aven’t seen the woman yet as I’d care to put in your place,’ ’e ses. And meant it, too, bless ’is heart. Ah, if all sons was like my Ned, there’d be fewer widders. That’s what I say, and chance it.”

“ Well, Terence,” said Sara at this point, “ we’d better be goin’; for dinner’s to be early to-night, owin’ to us all goin’ to the Exhibition.”

“ I’ve really had an awfully good time,” said Terence heartily. “ I hope Mrs. Grub will let me come with her again soon, and also”—bowing to his hostess —“ that Mrs. Skinner will allow me to join another tea-party at an early date.”

“ Pleased and proud, sir, I am sure,” said Mrs. Skinner, her kind old face flushing with pleasure.

“ Quite the gentleman,” murmured Miss Hobart in



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an aside to John Fergus — "quite. Really, his manners remind me, in a way of speaking, of my future husband's."

"Well, good-bye all," said Sara, pulling out her tulle bonnet-strings and adjusting her veil. "I wish I 'ad a 'ouse of my own to invite you all to. But owin' to the way things 'as been left, it's a bit difficult —"

"Nonsense, Cousin Sara!" exclaimed Terence. "Of course you must have the privilege of asking your friends, if you want to. We'll arrange it with Aunt Selina. It's a bit thick if you can't do as you like in what is really your own home."

"Very 'andsomely said," whispered Miss Hobart to Mrs. Skinner. "A fine, outspoken young feller, and a good deal what my future 'usband must have been as a younger man."

"Well, Cousin Sara, I've really had a ripping time," said Terence gleefully, as they drove westwards. "And I like your friends — except the gallant socialist; and even he's not bad fun, when he's on the war-path. We'll fix up an afternoon to have the whole lot to tea and music and that. I'll speak to Sallie about it. It's a rotten shame that you should pay Aunt Selina seven hundred a year, and not even be able to ask a friend to come and see you. We'll change all that, you bet."

"Lor', my dear, your Aunt Selina would fair take the 'ump at any of my friends," answered Sara deprecatingly.

"Then let her take the hump," said Terence indignantly. "You know, Cousin Sara, you're far too good-natured, that's what's the matter with you. Don't

you worry. You shall have a tea-party of your own, and I'll do my best to make it a success."

"Bless your 'eart, you're a good lad," replied Sara, obviously pleased and touched by this recognition of her rights. "I don't deny as how I would like some of the old lot from Limehouse to see where I'm livin', and all that. But I doubt if your aunt will allow it. After all, it's her house, when all's said and done."

"You leave it to me," was the oracular answer.

After dinner they all repaired to the Exhibition, where they met Armine and her father, accompanied by Sheridan Faulds.

The latter greeted Sara with marked deference, and after escorting her through the Senegalese village — which did not impress her at all favourably, judging from her frank criticisms thereon — suggested that they should listen to the music for a time.

"Wherever have the others got to?" said Sara, gazing anxiously from side to side. "Don't you see them nowhere?"

"Never mind the others," answered Mr. Faulds in a sentimental voice. "You and I can do very well without them."

"I don't know so much about that," said Sara shortly.

"You know that I will take care of you, don't you?" continued the young man, almost tenderly.

"Take care of me?" repeated Sara, with her hearty laugh. "My good young man, if Sara Grub wanted any taking care of, it would take more than you to do it. Why, I could almost put you in my pocket!"

"Then why should you fear to be left alone with

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me?" went on her cavalier. "You are not afraid of me, surely?"

"Afraid of you? Rather not! But I want to find the others, because there's one or two things I want to ask Mr. Torrens about."

"Can you not ask me, dear Mrs. Grub? There are very few things I do not know," said the young man modestly.

"Do you know anything about America?" asked Sara.

"Well, I have not been there, personally," admitted Mr Faulds.

"Ah!" was the dry answer. "Well, you see, Mr. Torrens has been there, personally. Not that I knew there was any other way of gettin' anywheres, except personally. I know a young man as wants to go to America — a young man as would turn his hand to anything, and wants to make a fresh start. And it's him I want to talk to Mr. Torrens about."

"Well, if we sit down here," suggested the young man, "we shall be more likely to see him than if we pursue him all over the place."

"Oh, all right," said Sara, "though I can't think why you should want to dance attendance on an old woman when there are plenty of young ones about. But perhaps you ain't a favourite with young women?"

"It is not for me to say," replied Mr. Faulds, with a weary smile. "But why speak of yourself as an old woman, dear Mrs. Grub? You will seem never old to me. It hurts me inexpressibly to hear you depreciate yourself thus."

"If nothing hurts you more than that, you'll 'ave

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an easy enough passage from this world to the next," said Sara briefly. "There's Mr Torrens! No, it ain't. This light is so deceivin'."

The band was clanging out a merry mazurka, and under the cover of its strains Mr. Faulds said:

"I wonder if you have any idea what I have wanted to say to you almost ever since I knew you."

"I 'aven't a notion," answered Sara abstractedly.

"May I tell you? You will listen to me, will you not?" he went on entreatingly.

"Why, of course. I wouldn't be so uncivil as to not listen. For that matter, I couldn't help it, seeing you're at my very elbow," was the amiable reply.

"Ah, that is where I would wish to be while we both live!" said Mr. Faulds earnestly. "Dear Mrs. Grub, you surely cannot have been blind to the sentiments which I have entertained for you from the moment of our very first meeting?"

"I certingly wasn't aware as how you entertained any special sentiments," said Sara, in a peculiar voice. "However, go on; I'm listenin'. What kind of sentiments was they?"

"You do not know?" he murmured.

"Bless the man, haven't I said I don't?"

"I thought that women knew such things by intuition," he answered. "I thought they knew without being told."

"Yus, there's a good few things they know without bein' told," agreed Sara — "quite a good few things, there is. But this ain't one of 'em, it seems. Perhaps the others have gone to the place where the dresses and things are bein' exhibited," she added, looking at her watch with an uncompromising yawn.

THE OTHER SARA

"Mrs. Grub," said Mr. Faulds, in desperation, "I have the deepest regard for you, as I think you must know. I feel convinced that we are twin-souls. Will you honour me by marrying me?"

Sara turned and looked at him in a way that gave him the curious conviction that he had shrunk considerably.

"You want to marry me?" she said slowly. "Well, now, that's funny! How old might you be, may I ask?"

"I am thirty-five," he answered. "But —"

"And how old do you s'pose I am?" pursued Sara.

"Dear Mrs. Grub, you are one of those personalities with whom age does not meddle."

"Well, well, that's as it may be. Accordin' to my birth-certificate, I'm a bit over fifty."

"It is nothing to me," he asseverated — "absolutely nothing. I entreat you to say that you believe me."

"Yus, I believe you — I do," she answered, with a laugh that seemed to him in questionable taste. "I don't believe you'd care if I was eighty."

"Ah, how well you understand me!" he murmured.

"Young man, I understand you a 'eap better than you, maybe, think," was the inscrutable answer. "And so you want to marry me — you, a young feller of thirty-five, 'as took a fancy to a woman of over fifty? Is that so? It seems kind of odd-like."

"'A fancy' is scarcely an appropriate phrase," said Mr. Faulds reproachfully.

"Well, no, p'raps it ain't," answered Sara meditatively. "I dessay you're right. What phrase had you thought of makin' use of, in a way of speakin'?"

THE OTHER SARA

"We 'take a fancy' to many things," he said, looking at her with his head very much on one side. "We 'take a fancy' to a picture, a book, a place. But the sentiment one has for the woman one loves is very, very different. She simply becomes necessary to us."

"You don't say so! And so I've gradually become kind of necessary to you, then?"

He bowed without speaking.

"Well, I will say you're a very unusual young man," said Sara. "Fancy, now, me 'avin' a young sweet-heart at my age! Lor', it do seem queer! And suppose I do promise to marry you? I suppose my money 'asn't nothink to do with it?"

"If you promise to marry me, you will make me the happiest of men," he said, taking her hand in his. "As for your money, I swear to you I'd rather you hadn't a penny."

"I'm thinking what I'd call you for short," she said. "I s'pose I'd 'ave to call you Sherry. And I don't think I'd like to keep shoutin' out 'Sherry' all over the 'ouse. It 'ud remind me of a woman I knew as used to be took bad and call out for 'brandy, brandy,' constant."

"It matters little what you call me," he said tenderly, "if you only let me call you mine."

"Then it's all fixed up as 'ow we're goin' to be married," observed Sara cheerfully. "Now, the thing is, can you afford to keep a wife? I've a sort of recollection of you sayin' you was kind of hard up."

"Well, of course, my means are not what I could wish," stammered Mr. Faulds, after a pause. "But I dare say we could arrange — er — er —"

"You see," went on Sara thoughtfully, "it's kind

can be eating for a while longer
doin' nothink all day. And I
a pleasure to you — lovin' me
think for me. It's very beauti
she added, shaking her head th
of love that makes a young
woman old enough to be 'is mo
his fingers to the bone for her
be proud of, my little Sherry!

Mr. Faulds listened in petr
had assumed a sickly greenish l

For quite a minute he did
band played an elfish tarantelle
self contentedly with her handl
in a queer, shaken voice:

"I—I—I did not unc
was not aware — that you wou
you married. I — that is very

"Yus — just what I was say
quilly. "But one can't 'ave
I'm the woman you love, and
just now, you'd rather I 'adn't

THE OTHER SARA

cial eyes. "I'm afraid I ain't the woman you love, after all."

"Not at all — I mean, of course, my sentiments are unchanged," he answered, with a sickly smile. "But —"

"But you'd feel the want of the golden trimmin's? Eh? Is that it? Sara, rich — is a twin-soul; but Sara, poor — ain't?"

"I confess I think you have hardly treated me fairly," he muttered sullenly.

"How 'aven't I treated you fairly?" demanded the lady from Limehouse. "What d'ye mean?"

"I think you might have warned me —"

"Warned you? Warned you of what? Warned you not to make marriage proposals to me? 'ow did I know what you was drivin' at? A nice jay I should 'ave looked — like 'Nancy Baxter, who refused the man before he axed her,' as the song says. I'm to understand it's all off, then?" she concluded, with a gurgling little laugh. "The 'marriage will not take place,' as the fashion-papers put it."

"My income is not sufficient for me to marry a woman entirely without means," Mr. Faulds answered stiffly.

"I see. It's just enough to let you marry a woman with, say, ten thousand a year, the 'alf to be settled on you," said Sara. "I suppose, now, you're what they calls in novels a fortin'-hunter? Well, as it 'appens, I don't lose my money when I marries. It's fixed on me, right enough, for my life — and to do what I likes with. But I had a kind of feeling that it was the money you was arter, and not me — so I thought I'd see. I don't want to be rude, but I can't help

money over to a little scare
money 'll buy better'n that,
if I was on the look-out I
ain't."

"Mrs. Grub — Sara!" ex
hurriedly. "Surely you kn
So I have taken you in su
By Jove, you must have thou
regular sweep!"

"Yus, I did," was the dr
for that matter. No, no, you
jokin' abaht you — not mucl
as a scared rabbit. Well,
Only —"

"Only you've rather ma
Faulds, my good fellow," sai
them, in a low tone of ecst
Cousin Sara, you've given hin
to listen — only when I first
suitor backing out, I though
assistance. Happily, it was

THE OTHER SARA

beastly sneak's face. It was ripping, the way you sat on him."

"Oh, he's a 'umbug — nothink more nor less!" observed Sara easily. "But there, there's lots of 'umbugs goin' about — and, naterally, they buzz thickest where there's money. But whatever has got Mr. Torrens?"

"He and Armine met a pack of Americans, and Aunt Selina is engulfed in a crowd of Frenchwomen," said Terence. "So I bolted, and just caught sight of your bonnet as I was passing. You certainly have a fiery taste in bonnets, Cousin Sara. That one you've got on fairly hits one in the eye."

"Oh, well, I feel such a dowd, allus in black and dark colours, like a raven or a magpie or a sparrow. Lor', it's gettin' quite cold. Queer weather for June, I call it, after all that scorchin' heat. I carn't set here no longer, catchin' my death."

"Come on, then, and let's do what shows are open," suggested Terence. "Which will you do first? The Flip Flap, the Spiral, or the Indian Court, or what?"

"Let's do 'em all," said Sara. "And let's go in one of them steam launches. Where's Sallie?"

"She's wandering with Dunsettle. She'll be all right. I told her I was going to look after you. I say, Cousin Sara, let's be wheeled about in two chairs. It'll make Aunt Selina regularly mad if she sees us. Which will you have? — a bath-chair or a rickshaw?"

But they were destined to have neither, for with very little warning, a terrific thunderstorm broke almost immediately overhead, and sent everyone scamp-ering to find shelter where they could.

Sallie and James Dunsettle took refuge in the Club

I don't bear mance, Jan

"You don't deny that I do
with a tiny ripple of laughter

"You were very nasty,"
you were very angry, and a
best when she is angry."

"Is a man?" inquired Sally

"A man is generally more
jealous, and then he is apt to
By the way, have you heard
lately?"

"Oh yes, I hear by every
getting on all right. He has
But he doesn't mind that. (The
people rushing across the grass
her skirt flung right over her
Sara and Terence. Why, Sally
she added, as she helped her
from the clinging wet folds of

"Drowned would be more
she flopped into a chair and
which she shook violently.

THE OTHER SARA

you. Lucky for you, you weren't with Terence and me."

Mrs. Hamersley, who was standing beside a new acquaintance — a society dame, whose goodwill she had taken much pains to cultivate — took no notice of Sara's remark. Indeed, she ignored that lady altogether.

"Who is your eccentric friend?" inquired the newly acquired acquaintance superciliously.

"Oh, nobody — merely an unfortunate connection by marriage," Mrs. Hamersley answered with a nervous smile.

A terrific clap of thunder, following closely on a vivid flash of lightning, made the speaker end her sentence in a terrified shriek.

In the hissing downpour of the rain, Sara's voice was heard, saying clearly:

"Well may you scream, Seliner 'Amersley. People 'ave been struck dead for less misleadin' remarks than what you've just made. I ain't no unfortunate. And if anyone's a connection by marriage, it's you, not me. And well paid you are for being a connection. Not that I'd mention the seven hundred a year, only drove to it by insolence. But there, I'm makin' myself out even less of a lady than you, and chance it."

Poor Sara! she was very angry; but she was hurt as well, and her strong, honest voice shook a little.

At this moment James Dunsettle came forward, bearing a light cane chair.

"How are you, Mrs. Grub?" he said courteously. "Won't you sit down? You and I have not met for quite an appreciable time. I have picked up one or two bargains since I saw you. You must come one

in your house, whatever I have
Terence, I will have a glass o
good of you to think of it."

**But as she drove home with
was unusually silent and gra
ley's increasing hostility vexed
derstand it.**



Chapter XX

As the season wore on, with its scores of engagements for every day, Sara began to long for a little unfashionable rest.

"I feel fair done," she said to Mullins one hot night in the latter part of June, when she had just returned from a reception following a dinner and a theatre-party. "I suppose it's because I ain't used to it, nor never will be used to it. Why, three days 'ard washin', with a spring-cleaning throwed in, ain't nothink to it. And how them frail-looking bits of creatures stands it, I don't know. Of course, it's my own fault, in a way of speakin', for I said as how I wanted to do the thing thorough for once. But there, when we've got only half through the night's list of things to do, and places to get to, I'm that tired and sleepy I'd give the world to come 'ome and go to bed. But it's, 'Oh, we must go on to this, or look in at that,' until my legs gets that tired and my eyes that heavy I feel more like an Egyptian mummy than a livin' creature."

"Well, anyway, whatever you do or don't do, later on," observed Mullins, "you'll 'ave the satisfaction of knowin' you've had your fling with the best."

"It's a fling that leaves you without a kick in you," said Sara, as she crawled into bed, and burrowed luxuriously among the pillows. "Straight, I feel as if I could lie in this 'ere bed for a week, and never move a finger all the time."

man?" murmured Sara sleep

"So it seems. But I 'ave
Marriage is a kind of gam
Before they 'ave you, they l
speak as if it was so much
got you, they never give yo
mouth. Sometimes I think
'em is to keep them dangli
promises you don't mean t
there's no knowin' that they
off suddint with someone else
left in the lurch, like an old :

A peaceful snore was Sara'

* * * *

On the following day M
furious tone to Sallie:

"Really, it is too outrag
that Mrs. Grub has made up h
of her low friends from Lime
noon here, and actually sug
her have the drawing-room fo
ever been of anything so

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"Sallie, you are the most provoking girl I ever knew. Anyone else would have sympathized with me. But I really believe you prefer the lower classes."

"No, I don't," said Sallie. "But I have found some very interesting characters among them. Sara herself is simply a gem. I not only love her, but I am proud of her."

"Oh, don't talk such ineffable rubbish," answered her stepmother, drawing on a glove with such force that it split up the back. "As for me, I'm deadly, deadly ashamed of her. Thanks to her, I've lost the Honourable Mrs. Pitallion's friendship — just after I had strained every nerve to be on her visiting-list. Since that evening at the Exhibition she has scarcely spoken to me, and for nothing else, I feel convinced, than the scene your cousin made on the veranda of the Garden Club."

"I think it was you who made the scene, not Sara," observed Sallie quietly.

"Oh, well, have it as you like. One thing I'm determined on: if she does give this ridiculous tea-party, I shall not let her have it in my drawing-room."

"Where do you suggest that she should have it?" asked Sallie in the aloof voice that always exasperated her stepmother. "You would hardly relegate our cousin and her friends to the kitchen, I presume?"

"It is the most fitting place for them," replied Mrs. Hamersley viciously, as she rang for her maid to bring a fresh pair of gloves, "instead of tearing about my drawing-room like a set of wild beasts, breaking chairs and ornaments, spitting on the carpet, and Heaven knows what besides."

...

dearable.

"I couldn't help listening."
"Even if I'd been outside
heard. You were speaking s

Her mother's answer to t
out of the room, after shakin

"I expect all the servant
on Mrs. Hamersley fretfully.
goodness knows what they w

Sallie smiled — a small, fin

"Oh, of course you don't t
think," went on her stepmotl
the room in an excited fasl

"But I have seen Parker tu
at some of that Grub woman's

"If Parker is so badly trai
his laughter when attending
say it is time he did give nc
stamped her letter.

Her stepmother flung he
knocking over a small table as

Nevertheless, in spite of ho

intended the removal of the lighter pieces of furniture and most of the china. Then she drove off to a very smart luncheon, with a sense of vicious satisfaction.

Sallie did not see the dismantled drawing-room until a quarter of an hour or so before the guests arrived, when she found Sara standing gazing at the hideous pieces of sacking in a dismay that was almost comic.

"Good gracious!" Sallie exclaimed, "what on earth does this mean?"

"You may arsk," answered poor Sara dejectedly. "This is your stepmar's way of payin' me out, I 'spose. Well, it certingly is vexin', for I 'ave told them that the droring-room was a handsome room, and now it looks more like a barn nor anythink else. And I'd thought to do the thing so stylish, and ordered cabs to bring 'em every step of the way from Limehouse. However, it can't be 'elped. Don't you look so vexed, my pretty."

But Sallie had already rung for Parker, to whom she said sharply:

"Have this sacking taken up at once."

Parker, assisted by a couple of housemaids, worked with a will; for he was indignant at the slight put upon Mullins' mistress. Sallie and little Anne dragged in most of the banished chairs and couches, and made the room gay with flowering plants. The china and other ornaments were locked up, Parker said; also the silver tea-service.

"It don't matter," said Sara stoically. "Now, don't you go rushin' and worritin' about gettin' yourself hot, Sallie, my lamb. They'll all be here in a minute, for I told 'em four-thirty sharp. Thank you kindly, Parker; you 'ave a good kind 'eart."

"Sara's vexed," answered
And no wonder."

Then she told him what I

"What a rotten, low-down

"Never mind, Sara. I say

A row of cabs had stopped
presently Parker was anno
Limehouse with as much cer
been the highest in the land.

The Bassetts came first, M
pretty in a plain holland dre
husband in his usual attire
hanced by a stiffly starched co
son cashmere frock borrowe
very much too large for h
Skinner and Ned, dressed q
their "Sunday best," kept
rather nervous. Ada Hobar
pale green silk, with hat and
Fergus, looking very manly
holding his little lame daugh

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refreshments. Here Mullins, in a black alpaca gown, decorated with scarlet bows, was the presiding genius.

She nodded to each guest in a half-gracious, half-patronizing fashion, and handed them cups and plates with the air of one dispensing charity.

"Ain't there no beer nor sperrits nor anythink but that wash?" growled Jim Bassett, with a jerk of his unkempt head in the direction of the tea urns.

"No, there ain't," was the acid answer. "This ain't a pub. There's tea and cawfy and lemonide, and what more do you want? And there's at least six diff'rent kinds of sandwidges. I think you might 'ave 'ad the grace to brush yourself up a bit before comin' among quality."

"Not me," Jim answered sullenly. "If I'm brushed up enough for the East End, the West End 'll 'ave to take me as they find me."

Suddenly his gloomy face softened and changed in a manner marvellous to see. As I have said elsewhere, he was both handsome and powerfully built, but his lowering expression dominated all that was attractive in him. But for the moment his glance had fallen on a group of three, consisting of Sallie, little Anne, and his daughter Irene.

Now, Irene was the apple of her father's eye, though he strove to conceal it under a queer gruffness of manner when speaking of her or to her. His two other children he simply ignored, but he thought nothing too good for Irene. Therefore, when he saw Sallie smiling upon her without a trace of patronage, and supplying her with tea, cake, and sweetmeats with "her own hands," as he related afterwards to a circle of interested listeners at the Dolphin, and when he saw little

Presently Sallie moved to a friendly voice, as she held

"How do you do, Mr. having something to eat and

"Oh, I'm all right," he an indefinite desire to be as how.

"I have been talking to you lie went on. "What a nice-

"Oh, she ain't bad, ain't father awkwardly. "She's think, to look at her, 'ow 'eard 'er recite verses until y goin' to stop."

As he spoke, he stopped, a pot containing a plant that v to a curtain. Something in say:

"You are very fond of flowers

"I used to be," was the reply in Essex, where I come from

tory," said Sallie; "should you like to come and look at them?"

"Yus, I should," answered Jim, feeling, for the first time, somewhat ashamed of his careless and not too clean attire. "Flowers are rare company, I will say," he added, as they passed into the large, well-filled conservatory. "Straight, but you have some beauties here."

"Yes, but they're a bit neglected just at present," the girl said, as she nipped off one or two dead leaves. "The man who usually attends to them has been laid up with rheumatism. I suppose," she added, as a sudden idea struck her, "that you don't know anyone who would take his place for a few weeks?"

Bassett shook his head.

"No," he answered, kneeling down to prop up a straggling rose-branch. "None of my pals knows anythink of flowers and such-like."

"Well, if you should hear of anyone," went on Sallie, "you will let me know, won't you?"

"Bless you, I shan't 'ear of no one," answered Jim, rubbing his chin meditatively.


Just then little Anne came in.

"Sallie, may I take Irene upstairs to show her my doll's-house?" she asked breathlessly.

"Certainly, dear," answered Sallie, patting the small, eager face.

"Is she your sister?" Jim asked, moving his head in the direction of the flying Anne.

"Yes. At least, she is my half-sister. She is a dear little soul. She doesn't make friends easily with other children, as a rule. But she and your little daughter seem to have taken to one another."



“Oh, Mr. Bassett, would
delighted at the result of he
you manage it? Should yo

Jim looked at her suspicio

“Why wouldn’t I ’ave t
ain’t so bloomin’ busy as a
been told as ’ow I’m heart-la
and a ’eap o’ rot o’ that kind
it. I’ve ’eard as ’ow some
that no one ain’t sent into
hates, or carn’t put ’is min
And I never could put my
that’s a Gawd’s truth. Flo
different story.”

As he spoke, he glanced
slim, lissome figure and char
looked like some dainty flo
in her soft white gown, that
red-gold of her hair.

“I wonder,” Sally said he
be vexed if I asked you som

“A”

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"Well, I was only thinking," Sallie went on, looking straight at him with her wonderfully clear eyes, "whether, as you are so fond of flowers, you would care to take a post as head-gardener to some people I know in Essex. They are looking for a head-gardener. It is a lovely place, and the salary is very good, I know, besides a delightful cottage. I wonder if you would like it?"

Now, Sallie's speech pleased Jim Bassett; for the diplomatic use of the words "post" and "salary," in lieu of "place" and "wages," was soothing and gratifying.

However, he only said a trifle ungraciously:

"Don't suppose they'd care to take a man as 'adn't been in a sim'lar kind of place before, and as 'adn't no references."

"I would give you a reference, if you like," replied Sallie. "I know them very well, and they would know that I should not recommend anyone who was not industrious and trustworthy."

"I don't know as I'm what you'd call industrious," observed Bassett, with a brief, difficult grin. "I ain't done a stroke o' work since I quit gas-fittin'. But no one can't say I ain't trustworthy. I'll think it over, miss, and let you know. When 'd you want me to come to see to this?" he added, with a semi-circular movement of his head.

"As soon as possible. Shall we say to-morrow?" the girl answered.

"Right oh. I'll be 'ere in the mornin'. And look 'ere, miss. I'd like to shake 'ands with you. I'm only a rough workin' man, as never does a stroke of work when 'e can 'elp it, and you're a lady born, and

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looks it. But we understands one another. And you're not one of them as looks down on folks as is in a different way of livin'. And if there was more of your sort, there'd maybe be fewer of mine."

Sallie held out her hand, and the man took it in his almost gingerly. It looked so small and soft and white in his rough, hairy paw.

"S'elp me," he muttered, "if it don't make me think there's somethink in differences of class, arter all."

Sallie smiled, and led the way back to the drawing-room, where the rest of the company, refreshed by tea and coffee and countless cakes, and other comes-tibles, were sitting about in more or less awkward attitudes, conversing in undertones, and not looking particularly happy. But Terence soon circulated among them like a healthy breeze, and Sara trotted hither and thither with such a beaming smile, and such kindly, homely words of welcome, that gradually all felt more at their ease, especially when Sallie seated herself at the piano, and sang one song after another that they all knew and loved; for Sallie's singing was very popular in Sara's circle in Limehouse.

Then Terence recited one or two comic pieces, which hugely delighted his audience.

"Straight, sir, if you wouldn't make a fortun' in the 'alls!" exclaimed Ned Skinner. "I never did 'ear any amatoor as could touch you in them kind of pieces. Blest if you wouldn't knock the gallery every time."

"Well, I may have to make my living at it one day," said Terence cheerfully. "Who can tell? You never know your luck."

A little later John Fergus was persuaded to sing "Scots Wha Hae," which he did in a powerful voice

that rang to the very ceiling, and almost seemed to shake the windows. Then he and his little daughter sang a plaintive duet about a lost child, which made several of their feminine hearers sob audibly. After much persuasion, and with a good deal of blushing and nervous giggling, Irene Bassett recited "The Wreck of the Hesperus" and "The Soldier's Dream," both of which ancient lyrics were received as rapturously as though their date had been of yesterday. Little Bob Bassett, though still a semi-invalid, repeated, in a shrill, excited voice, part of a well-known and well-worn poem he had found in a tattered book in Sara's sixpenny box, one verse of which runs thus:

"He stood on his head on the wild sea-shore,
And joy was the cause of the act;
For he felt as he never had felt before,
Insanely glad, in fact.
And why? Because on that self-same day,
His mother-in-law had sailed
To a tropical climate far away,
Where tigers and snakes prevailed."

"Bravo Bob!" cried Terence, as Bob retired, overcome with sudden confusion, behind an easy-chair. "First-rate sentiments, for one so young."

Mr. and Mrs. Bassett, who had drifted together, felt mutually inflated with gratification; for they felt that their boy and girl had markedly distinguished themselves in distinguished company. Jim felt almost impelled to disclose to his wife Sallie's proposition regarding the post as head-gardener, but refrained, sagely reflecting that "women ought never to 'ear of things till they're finished."

By degrees the guests lost any sense of restraint and awkwardness, and strolled about the room examin-

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ing the pictures and such ornaments as Mrs. Hamersley had left untouched, commenting upon them freely, and with not a little originality.

The three children — Anne and the two Bassetts — and Winkle made a good deal of noise running hither and thither in a game of "tag." Mrs. Claptry had crept back to the refreshment-room and Mullins, to whom she confided her impression that "it was a very fine house, but that for her part she preferred her little nest in War Lane." At which confession Mullins smiled condescendingly, saying:

"It's only nat'ral that you should feel strange, Mrs. Claptry, not bein' used to sassiety ways. But it'll soon wear off. Look at Sara Grub, sailin' around as though the place belonged to 'er."

"Ah, Sara Grub, 'as a 'eart of gold," whimpered Mrs. Claptry, upon whom all and any emotion had a tearful effect. "Fancy 'er arskin' us all 'ere, bless 'er, an' sendin' kebs to bring us every step. If all as came into money was like 'er, the world wouldn't be the place it is. I only 'ope she'll last — that's all."

And Mrs. Claptry wiped her eyes with a folded pocket-handkerchief.

"Oh, Sara's all right," answered Mullins casually. "And Miss Sallie and her gets on fust-class. Miss Sallie's a young lady after my own heart, I will say. It beats me to know 'ow she's got to the right side of that good-for-nothing lout of a Bassett. But there he is, if you please, with as near a smile as I ever see on 'is scowlin' face. And 'er talking to 'im as soft and pretty as you please, as if 'e was a toff — which is 'er way, and loses nothin' by it, neither. As my friend Mr. Graves says, 'it takes a real lady to speak



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familiar to those beneath 'er, and yet give no openin' for liberties bein' taken.' ”

“ Was Mr. Graves the gentleman who opened the door? ” inquired Mrs. Claptry timidly.

“ Oh no; that was the butler, Mr. Parker, though, of course, 'e's a friend of mine too. Mr. Graves is at present out with the kerridge, though he may return at any moment.”

“ Dear, dear, it's a great change for you, Miss Mullins,” sighed the widow. “ There's no sayin' how 'igh you may look. You'll be 'avin' your own green-grocery shop next, I shouldn't wonder.”

“ I dare say I may look higher than green-grocery, Mrs. Claptry,” answered Mullins, with a slight jerk upwards of her head. “ I may even go as far as boots and shoes, wholesale and retail. But there's no knowin'.”

“ What will be, will be,” Mrs. Claptry answered. “ And in the meantime, I could be doing with another cup of tea.”

“ Well, I don't mind joining you,” replied Mullins, “ for I'm ready to drop with fatigue. I ain't as able for hard work as I used to be. Livin' in the lap of luxury does take it out of you, and that's the truth.”

Just then Miss Hobart sailed up to the table.

“ I'll take a cup of coffee, my good woman,” she said, sinking into a chair with an exaggerated air of languor. “ As quick as you can. I feel rather faint.”

“ Who are you callin' your good woman? ” flashed out Mullins. “ Givin' yourself airs! Not but what I'm as good as you, any day, and better. I ain't 'ad a career includin' pickle-factories and prisons, any-
more.”

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Miss Hobart fanned herself affectedly.

"I'm not accustomed to being cheeked by domestic servants," she said, stifling a yawn. "But I dare say Mrs. Grub spoils you, you bein' of her own class —"

"You imperent hussey!" exclaimed Mullins excitedly. "Who are you talkin' to? Come off it, or I'll get my friend Mr. Graves or Mr. Parker to 'ustle you off the doorstep — as I dare say you've been 'ustled off the doorstep of many a Cabinet Minister afore now. And as for givin' you cawfy, you can help yourself if you want any; comin' 'ere givin' insolence to respectable females, as ain't never seen the inside of a prison in their lives."

"Now, now, what's all this?" exclaimed Sara, bustling in at the sound of the raised voices.

For Mrs. Claptry was loudly entreating her companions to "'Ave no differences in quality's 'ouses, for the love of 'Eavenly goodness!"

"The matter is, Mrs. Grub, that I've been insulted at your party," explained Miss Hobart. "Which, if my future 'usband had been invited, as was only reasonable to expect, this lamentable scene wouldn't never have taken place."

"In the name of goodness, what's it all about," said Sara, turning to Mullins.

"She came in 'ere, tossin' 'er 'ead like a circus-hoss," answered the aggrieved Mullins, "and ordered cawfy, as if she was the Shah of Persia — callin' me 'good woman,' if you please. So I gave it to 'er 'ot, as anybody would — not the cawfy I didn't give 'er, nor won't."

"I'm afraid, Miss 'Obart, you're mistakin' your company," said Sara quietly, though with deepening



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colour. "It ain't considered good manners to come into respectable 'ouses and makes scenes and rows, as if you was in a street procession. But no doubt you've got into the way of it, and difficult to get over. As for cawfy, you're welcome to that, and anything else you fancy."

And Sara proceeded to pour out a cup of coffee, which she handed to Miss Hobart, saying:

"As for my not askin' your intended, it never came into my head — never 'avin' clapped eyes on 'im in my life — though no doubt a decent enough man in 'is own way."

Miss Hobart tasted her coffee, her hand shaking with suppressed rage.

"Oh, don't mention it," she said acidly. "I dare say he would hardly have cared to come to such a mixed assemblage, 'avin' friends as keep their own dog-carts, with stables separate. And just missed bein' on the County Council."

"Well, well, no harm done," answered Sara, recovering her good humour. "Have a sandwich, and try them strawberries. They ought to be worth eatin'. Now, Mullins, let bygones be bygones, and make a good tea, for it's tiring work supplyin' people with food and drink, and no time to take a taste yourself."

Mullins grunted something unintelligible; and just at that moment the drawing-room door opened, and Parker announced:

"Mrs. Pitallion."

Sallie went forward to meet her; and the new-comer said, after a puzzled glance round the room:

"Your man told me Mrs. Hamersley was out, but was expected back shortly. So, as he said you were

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at home, I thought I'd come in and wait. I want to persuade your stepmother to take tickets to dispose of for our Fancy Fair next week. They are only two guineas each, but people are so mean, or so hard up, or both, that they won't take a single ticket. So I thought perhaps your stepmother might take a few — even if only a dozen. She hinted that she might."

"I don't know," Sallie replied doubtfully. "But she won't be very long. I expect her any moment now."

"This is not your stepmother's 'at home' day, is it?" said Mrs. Pitallion. "I quite thought she said —"

"No; we are having an 'at home' of our own," put in Terence, who had been hovering near, with dancing eyes.

He had known and disliked Mrs. Pitallion from childhood, and foresaw an opportunity for playing upon her weaknesses.

"You go and see to our other guests, Sallie," he continued, seating himself beside Mrs. Pitallion, and kindly putting a couple of cushions behind her ample shoulders.

"Now we can be comfortable," he said cheerfully. "So glad you happened to come in. We have one or two rather interesting people here. It's awfully difficult to get hold of them — in fact, they really may be said hardly to go into society at all. Their work claims them, heart and soul. But my cousin, Mrs. Grub, has great influence with all classes, and she persuaded them. You've heard of her, of course. Came into an enormous fortune some time ago."

"Oh, really," interrupted Mrs. Pitallion, "I won-



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der if she would take tickets for my Fancy Fair?"

"Oh, sure to!" answered Terence easily. "We'll ask her later on."

"Thank you so much. You are a good boy. Why do you never come to see me now?"

"Most awfully busy. Hardly a moment to myself," was the grave answer. "I'll come one day soon, though, if I may."

"That's right," she said, settling herself more comfortably among her cushions. "Now tell me who all these people are. I can see, of course, that they are celebrities of some kind. Their dress is so — so peculiar. Now, who is that wild-looking man near the fireplace? I am sure I have seen his portrait somewhere."

"Oh, that is James Bassett, the famous socialist," replied Terence in a voice of suppressed glee. "You must have heard of him, surely?"

"Yes, I think I have," replied Mrs. Pitallion eagerly. Her besetting weakness was the hunting of social lions for her Monday evenings — to which latter functions, by the way, Mrs. Hamersley had long aspired in vain.

"He's the most extraordinary man," went on Terence. "Holds the most revolutionary ideas. He'll be a notorious character one day, I expect. Indeed, to a certain extent, he is now."

"I feel certain I have met him somewhere," said Mrs. Pitallion, knitting her brows. "Do you think he would come to one of my Mondays?"

"You might ask him," answered Terence. "But for such a clever man, he is awfully shy."

"I wish you would introduce him to me," continued

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his companion, surveying the unconscious Jim through her gold pince-nez. "He has a wonderful face. And do introduce Mrs. Grub. Is that she, talking to a little lame girl, near one of the windows? I seem to know her face."

"Yes. Should you like to know her? She's a thorough good sort. And if anybody can bring clever, interesting kind of people to your Mondays, she can."

"Dear me, I am very glad I came to-day," said Mrs. Pitallion genially. "I had no idea—I must see more of Mrs. Hamersley. Ah, there is your friend Mr. Bassett crossing the room. I do believe he is going. Do catch him and introduce him."

"All right. But I must prepare you for one thing," Terence answered. "He goes about so much in the East End, and among such rough people, you know, that he has quite adopted their way of speaking, as well as their dress—and, as a matter of fact, almost their manners. So you must prepare for a bit of a shock. Bassett has no respect for sex or persons. He'll probably talk to you as if he was a common working man."

"But how charming!" exclaimed Mrs. Pitallion in a delighted voice. "Oh, do be quick! I simply *must* know him. And he has almost reached the door."

Accordingly, Terence captured Jim, and brought him, an unwilling prey, towards Mrs. Pitallion's sofa.

Sallie, from afar, watched the coming comedy in mingled dismay and glee.

"Mr. James Bassett, Mrs. Pitallion," said Terence, and swiftly left them.

"So pleased to meet you, Mr. Bassett," said the lady

sweetly. "I feel so sure we must have met before. I am *so* interested in your views, and so glad I chanced to come here to-day; for I've no doubt you are so chained to your work that your respites are very few and far between."

"Who are ye gettin' at?" growled Jim, who thought he was being chaffed, and resented it. "What d'y'e mean about my work? Why should I do work if it ain't congenial? Answer me that."

Mrs. Pitallion was somewhat taken aback. Then she recalled instances of various other celebrities to whom the mention of their work was as the proverbial red rag to the proverbial bull. So she hastened to say, in hurried tones:

"You are quite mistaken, Mr. Bassett. I had no intention of even hinting that your fame had reached my ears. That is to say, I mean — I can so well understand your feeling of reluctance to the public knowing that you do any work at all."

"If I was doin' any work, the bl — bloomin' public might know it, and welcome, for me," Mr. Bassett answered gruffly. "What do such as you know abaht work?"

"Oh, but I can assure you, I have done my little best," said Mrs. Pitallion. "I have visited many of these poor creatures in the East End slums — at least, I did at one time, when I was a girl — and gave them tracts and soup-tickets and things —"

"And what right 'ave you to go 'andin' round tracts and soup-tickets to folks in the slums?" demanded Jim in a fierce voice that made Mrs. Pitallion jump. "'Ow'd you like people bustin' into your house, whether you were 'avin' meals, or busy, or feelin' like

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'eavin' bricks at intruders in your 'ome? I calls it insolence. We're as good as you, and mebbe better, and we don't want tracts no more'n you do."

"But, my dear Mr. Bassett, it is only from charitable motives. It is our duty to help those poor creatures, surely, as far as we can? Of course, I know your views are extreme — most interesting, of course, but extreme. I have a cousin who holds similar views. He thinks all classes should be equal. Quite right, in a way, of course, and most interesting. But hardly practicable. Eh? Between you and me — you don't really think as you're supposed to do?"

Jim eyed her with disfavour and suspicion.

"Don't I?" he said sourly. "I don't know what I'm supposed to think. I'm blest if I know what you're drivin' at."

Mrs. Pitallion began to think that this particular lion might growl too fiercely at her Monday evenings. Nevertheless, she insisted to herself that, though a rough diamond, he was distinctly interesting and unusual.

"I suppose you very rarely have an evening disengaged?" she said tentatively. "Your life must be a continual whirl, a striving to be in many places at once."

Jim looked at her with eyes that were at once puzzled and resentful.

"Blime me if I know what you're gettin' at," he said, shuffling his feet uneasily. "As for bein' in more than one place at once, that's nothin' but foolishness. All I wants at present is to get out of this 'ere place and 'ave a pipe. If this is the way toffs spend the

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afternoons, it's no wonder they look as silly as some of 'em do."

At this moment Mrs. Hamersley came into the room. As her gaze rested upon the company generally, and upon Jim Bassett in particular, an expression of the keenest disgust clouded her face. But when she realized that Bassett's companion was Mrs. Pitallion — Mrs. Pitallion, who had never visited her before, who moved in the highest circles, and who was now surrounded by Sara and her dreadful satellites — Selina Hamersley felt that the fates had been too cruel.

"Mrs. Pitallion," she exclaimed wildly, "how can I explain — how can I apologize for this dreadful contretemps! I would not have had you meet those people for worlds. Parker ought not to have admitted you. Oh — oh — it is too humiliating — too horrible!" And she sank into a chair, sobbing and laughing in violent hysterics.

Mrs. Pitallion rose in haughty bewilderment.

"I'm afraid I don't quite understand," she said stiffly to Sallie. "I had no idea that my visit would be so distasteful to your stepmother. I can only apologize, and assure her that it shall not be repeated."

Here Sara bursted forward in genuine distress.

"Lor', don't let's 'ave no quarrellin' or differences," she exclaimed. "Don't you see my cousin's upset at you findin' all my friends 'ere, and not knowin' how you'd take them. She's only too glad you should come, if only her own lot had been here. She don't want to know my friends, and never set eyes on any of 'em till to-day. And I do 'ope as 'ow you won't go until I've took one or two tickets for your Fancy Fair, as Mr. Agnew has told me of."

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Mrs. Pitallion paused, then said distantly:

"I shall, of course, be pleased to sell you as many tickets as you require, Mrs. — er — Grub, is it not?"

"Then let's 'ave a dozen," said Sara recklessly.

Mrs. Pitallion unbent considerably.

"This is really good of you, Mrs. Grub," she murmured, as she produced a packet of tickets from a gold-mounted handbag.

Mrs. Hamersley uttered a queer, strangled cry.

Sallie gently led her from the room.



Chapter XXI

ON the following morning after breakfast there was a regular battle royal between Mrs. Hamersley and Sara. The former made some somewhat unforgivable remarks, and the latter, goaded to fury, let herself go, rather. Altogether, things were said on both sides that had better been left unsaid.

Finally, Sara capped the climax by declaring that she would rather forfeit her income by leaving the house than submit to Selina's insolence.

"I'll see that Lirrip this very day," she concluded, her voice shaking, and her honest face almost pale. "Poor I've been before, and poor I'll be again. But live in your house longer than I can help I will not."

Then Mrs. Hamersley suddenly cooled down; for she remembered that the departure of Sara meant also the departure of one hundred and seventy-five pounds a quarter.

"I'm afraid we have both lost our tempers, Cousin Sara," she said, with a sickly smile; "but I have really been very much upset lately by various things. Of course, you will not really think of leaving us?"

"Oh, I'm Cousin Sara now, am I?" observed that lady dryly. "I've been Mrs. Grub up to now. As for thinkin' of leaving you, it's past thinkin', for I'm goin' to do it, fortin or no fortin. I've heard of worms turnin' at last, and the worm called Sara Grub has

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bore all she can. Now, there ain't no call for cryin'. I've felt like cryin' many a time, but choked it back. To Mr. Lirrip's I go this very day, to see what can be done. I'll miss Sallie, I don't deny, and little Anne, and — a heap of other things. But, there, I felt it comin' on."

Here Alec, who had come into the room some time ago, unexpectedly spoke up.

"I don't want you to go, Cousin Sara," he said in his bluff, childish voice. "I think you're a real brick. I've found out it was you sent me my bicycle and my new cricket bat. And I'm jolly sorry I cheeked you when you first came. And Miss Cave 'll be awfully vexed if you go. She likes you no end. If you go away, I'll come and see you every day. And so will Anne. And if you've no money — or, at least, not much — we'll come and buy things at your shop, and pay you good prices, too."

"Bless your little 'eart," replied Sara, winking away an unruly tear, "you'll allus be welcome, wherever I may be or may not be."

And she hurriedly went out of the room.

A little later she put on her walking things, and made her way to Kensington Gardens, to have, as she called it, "a good think."

And there she chanced to meet John Fergus and his little daughter Jessie.

I do not know if I have mentioned that Sara and John Fergus were friends of some years standing. Each had a genuine respect for the other, and asked for mutual advice when occasion arose.

So Sara at once told Fergus of her determination, and of the causes that had led to it.



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"And if it comes to be a question of money or peace of mind," she added, "I say, give me peace of mind."

John was silent for a time; then he rose, wheeled Jessie's invalid-chair under a tree near by, and came back to the seat where Sara was sitting.

"Mrs. Grub," he said slowly, "we've known one another a good few years now, and I've never altered my first opinion of you. When I came into my four hundred a year, my first thought was that if you had been as you were in War Lane, I'd have made honourable proposals of marriage to you. But I couldna thole the thought of my four hundred and your ten thousand. But if you've made up your mind to forfeit it by leavin' your cousin's, I'll be the proud and happy man if you'll tak' me and be a mither to my wee Jessie."

"Goodness gracious me!" exclaimed Sara, blushing furiously. "Why, what are you talkin' abaht? A fine figure of a man like you, with a decent income — there's many a young gal would jump at you."

"I'm no wantin' to be jumped at by young lasses," was the stolid answer. "I aye had a fancy for you, only I couldna afford to ask you. Wummun, ye micht think it over. I've rented a bit cottage up the river, with a fine big garden. Ye could grow your ain vegetables and sich-like. And I'll be a guid, kind man to ye, I promise ye."

"Such nonsense," returned Sara, laughing nervously. "A strappin' gal of twenty would be more like you."

"Hoots, wummun," said John impatiently. "A man kens best himsel' what he wants. Jist tell your

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cousin you're no goin' to bide no longer, and let the siller go hang. We'll no need it."

Sara's eyes grew curiously soft.

"Well, then, if you're bent on marryin' a poor woman, and an elderly woman at that," she said slowly, "I will say that I have nothink to say agin you as a 'usband. As well you know, my first wasn't a angel of light, and I did think as I'd 'ad enough of marriage to last me for this world and the next. But there, if you want me, you can 'ave me."

"You'll no regret it, my wummun," answered John simply.

"There's one thing," went on Sara, "maybe I should have told you. But I kind of wanted to see if it was myself you wanted. There's been them as thought only of the money. Well, as it 'appens, my marryin' don't make no difference in my fortin. So you'll 'ave a rich wife instead of a poor one."

Genuine surprise, mingled with some dismay, flashed across Fergus's face.

"D'ye tell me!" he exclaimed. "Eh, but that maks a differ. I couldna have it said that John Fergus made up to a wummun for her siller. And forebye that, I couldna thole the kind of life that gangs with ten thousand a year. I'm goin' to end my days in the bit cottage I tell't ye of. I'm no wantin' grandeur and carriages and such-like. We'll cry off, ma wummun. If I'd kent, I wouldna have asked ye."

Sara stared at him in amazed silence for perhaps ten seconds; then she said, with a short laugh:

"Well, you *are*! Why, any other man would have — But there, it does seem 'ard that a person's money should come between them and a 'usband they



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could 'ave lived comfortable with. 'Tain't all a picnic, 'avin' fortins left unexpected. But what am I to do? I can't 'elp 'avin' it."

John Fergus considered.

Then he said slowly:

"You say I'm the man you could live comfortable with. So I take it for granted that you're no unwillin' to marry me."

"Oh, go and play," said Sara somewhat impatiently. "I think I see myself tellin' a man I'm willin' to marry 'im when he's as good as told me he ain't willin' to marry me."

"Whisht, wisht, now. I didna say I wasna willin', and you ken that fine," John answered reprovingly. "What sticks in my throat is a' that weary amount o' siller. It's an awfu' responsibeelity. And I've my ain four hundred to think of, mind ye. But what for could ye no endow a hospital or such-like wi' the capital? You could maybe keep enough to bring you in, say, four hundred a year. I'd no object to that. And you could get your lawyer to settle it on yer-sel'."

"S'elp me, if it isn't a fust-rate idea," exclaimed Sara, delighted. "Well, I always say there's nothin' like a man for findin' a way out of difficulties. And it does seem a sin to say it, but times and times I've wished all that there money at the bottom of the sea, in a way of speakin'. It is that tryin' 'avin' to live in the 'ouse with that 'Amersley woman. Anythink like her insolence never was known. And well you may know it, when I tell you I was ready to chuck all the money rather than put up with her. But as the will said I must live with 'er till I die or marry — well,

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you see, marriage is a kind of way out, without losin' everything; for I don't feel like dyin' just yet. And to let you know that I ain't just takin' you because I wants to git married by 'ook or crook, I may tell you that I 'ave refused two offers within the last few months — one from a professor, and one from a poet. But what they wanted was the money, with me thrown in. So it's a kind of relief to find you only wantin' me, and objectin' to the money."

"Weel, weel, then, it's settled; and you can think at you leasure whit kind of home or hospital you'd like to endow. And we'll get marrit in September, for it'll be then before the bit cottage 'll be redded up. The garden's a good deal neglected; and I'd like it to be bonnie and tidy afore I bring ye hame."

"Right oh!" replied Sara. "And we won't say nothink to no one in the meantime, excep' to Mr. Lir-rip. But I'll give Mrs. 'Amersley a quarter's notice, as is only fair. But what about your little Jessie? Maybe the child would fret at the idea of a step-mother?"

"No fear," he answered confidently. "Wee Jessie kens fine I aye had a fancy for ye. I've nae secrets from wee Jessie. She's a wunnerfully understandin' bairn. Bless her! You've naething to fear from wee Jessie."

"Well, well," said Sara, "I'm sure it'll be a comfort to live in a plain 'omely way, and potter about my own 'ouse and garden and kitchen, and 'ave my own friends in a quiet way, instead of spendin' my days and nights trailin' here and trailin' there, dressed up tight and square, even if ready to drop."

"And you think you'll no miss all that?" he asked.



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looking at her very steadily. "You'll no miss your carriage, and your leddy's-maid, and so on?"

"Not me. Arter all, on eight hundred a year between us we can 'ave a keb or a taxi if we wants it. It's nothing more nor less than waste, the upkeep of a carriage and man. There's better ways of spendin' "

Chapter XXII

JIM BASSETT kept his promise to Sallie, and appeared punctually at the appointed time to begin his work in the conservatory. He had washed his face and hands, and actually had his hair cut; so that he looked a different creature.

"I wasn't quite sure if it was you," said little Anne who was perched upon one of the stone shelves, with Winkle in attendance.

"Wasn't you?" growled Jim.

"No, really. You look ever so much nicer. Didn't Irene think so, too?"

"She ain't seen me to-day, Irene 'ain't," answered Irene's parent, lifting an enormous flower-pot as if it were an infant, and setting it carefully on the tiled floor. "And if she 'ad, Irene knows better than to pass remarks."

"Why? Is she afraid of you?" asked Anne curiously.

"Afraid of me?" repeated Jim. "W'y should she be? 'Ain't I been a good father to 'er? But kids orter be kep' in their place. Some of 'em talks a 'eap too much."

"I talk a good deal," observed Anne cheerfully. "I like it. I'm kind of interested in you, you know. Irene says you're a socialist."

"Irene'd better shut 'er 'ead, and not gas abaht



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things she don't know nothink abaht," was the brief answer. "Where's your sister? I 'ain't seen 'er since I come."

"She'll be here soon. She's taking a splint out of cook's thumb."

"Ah, she's a real tip-topper, she is!" muttered Bassett, running a finger along the edge of his pruning-knife.

"Do you mean cook — or my sister?" inquired Anne, with an elfish smile.

"Cook? I don't know nothin' abaht no cooks. I was speakin' of your sister. You won't ever be like 'er, either to look at or to speak to."

"I don't think you should be rude," said Anne, in a dignified little voice, "even if you are a working-man and a socialist. My sister says no one can afford to be unmannerly, whatever their position in life."

Bassett eyed the speaker curiously.

"You're a queer little piece, and no mistake," he said, breaking a long thin stick across his knee. "How old might you be, now?"

"I don't think my age matters," was the severe answer. "I'm quite old enough to know what I'm talking about. I know all about socialism, too — though I dare say you think I don't."

"S'elp me if I ever see such a kid!" said Jim, his lips absolutely relaxing into a species of smile. "And so you know all abaht socialism, do you? Well, there's them four or five times your age and size as couldn't say as much, I'll warrant. It 'ud be kind of interestin', now, to know what your idea of socialism might be."

"Well, of course, it's rather difficult to explain,"

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replied Anne, knitting her straight eyebrows. "But *you* know all about it, so why should you ask me?"

"Well, you see," said Jim, "socialism's a thing that's apt to mean one thing to one party and another to another."

"What does it mean to you?" asked Anne.

"That would be too long a story," Jim answered.

"Here — you tyke — garn, will you?"

This last remark to Winkle, who had seen a spider in a flower-pot, and was hunting it vigorously.

"Come here, Winkle," commanded Anne. "Jump up beside me. You know you're not allowed to touch the flower-pots."

Then she went on:

"Perhaps you don't exactly know what you mean by socialism?"

"Mebbe not," was the dry answer. "And mebbe no more don't you. Blime me if I know what makes me talk to such a kid," he added *sotto voce*.

"But I'm quite willing to listen," Anne continued, "if you tell me your ideas. Evan Rollestone, now, says that no man is a socialist who has more than seventy pounds a year."

"And who might Evan Rollestone be when 'e's at 'ome?" muttered Jim.

"He isn't at home just now," Anne answered. "He's in West Africa. But when he does come home he's going to marry my sister Sallie. He says that the only people who want everything equally divided are the people who have nothing."

"Well, when 'e comes 'ome," interrupted Jim, "you just arsk 'im why anybody should 'ave nothink,



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and why others should 'ave everythink? Why should your kind of folk live in a 'ouse like this, and me live in the kind of 'ouse I do? Answer me that."

"Well, of course, I haven't seen your house," observed Anne, after a brief pause. "But you couldn't expect to live in a house quite the same as this."

"And why not?" demanded Jim fiercely.

"You wouldn't be happy here," was the calm answer. "I saw you were quite glad to get away yesterday. Working men like to sit in a kitchen, and smoke strong-smelling tobacco, and sit about in rather shabby clothes with no collar on."

Jim, for once, was at a loss for an answer, and Anne went on:

"If you lived in a house like this you would have to be well-dressed and quite clean all day. And you would have to dress for dinner every night, and keep going to all kinds of parties and dinners and things, whether you wanted to or not."

"Well, and why not me as well as another, if I 'ad the money to do it?" growled Jim.

"But perhaps you wouldn't have the money to do it," said Anne. "Mother often hasn't. I've seen her crying about it. She isn't really very well off, you know."

Jim tied up a fuchsia in silence. Then he said:

"It ain't no use talkin' to kids abaht things. They can't understand; and no call that they should."

"Oh yes, they do; at least, I do. When grown-up people are talking, and people, who are not grown-up are listening, of course they understand, unless they're very stupid. And if they don't know what some

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words mean they can ask afterwards. I always do. Alec doesn't — he's my brother, you know; he's only a little older than me — because he says it looks as if one was an ignorant ass."

"And does your brother know as much about socialism as you do?" inquired Jim, in a somewhat sarcastic tone.

"No, not quite. He says all the lower classes are socialists, because they are silly asses who won't work. But, of course, he doesn't mean you, because I'm sure you do work; and you must be a good workman, or Sallie wouldn't have had you to do the conservatory. It's her conservatory, you know; at least, all the plants are, and she pays for the heating and that out of her own money. How much is she going to pay you?"

"I don't want no payment for this job, I don't. I'm doin' it to oblige your sister."

"Oh!" said Anne. "That's very kind of you."

Then she added contemplatively:

"It would be rather nice if all workmen were socialists."

Just then Sallie came in.

"Good-morning, Mr. Bassett," she said. "I have just telephoned to Mr. Torrens. It is he who is on the lookout for a head-gardener. You remember I spoke of it to you yesterday? Will you go around to see him to-morrow morning? That is, if you think you would like the post."

"Yes, I'd like it," Jim answered briefly. "I've been thinkin' it over. But I don't think as 'ow I'll take it."

Sallie looked disappointed.



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"Oh!" she said, after a brief pause. "I am so sorry."

"There's reasons for it," went on Jim, with a queer note of regret in his rough voice. "But I can't just —"

He stopped, and glanced at little Anne.

Sallie understood.

"Anne dear," she said, "will you go up to Miss Cave now?"

"Oh, all right," said that young person cheerfully. "Come on, Winkle."

When they had disappeared, Bassett said gruffly and somewhat shamefacedly:

"You see, miss, it's like this: I don't want you to go recommendin' me to your friends, and them bein' disappointed."

"But why should they be disappointed?" she answered. "I know you'd do your very best."

Jim pruned a climbing-plant vigorously before he answered.

"Well, to tell the truth, I'm a bit of a 'ard drinker; and when I've 'ad more than usual I don't suppose any work I do is exactly up to the mark."

Sallie was somewhat at a loss as to how to answer this frank confession. And presently Jim continued:

"Do you mean to say Sara Grub ain't told you I boozed a bit?"

"No, she certainly did not," answered Sallie. "But you know, I think it was very honest of you to tell me. And — I'm quite sure that — I mean, it doesn't follow that you should — that you —"

"Should go on bein' a boozer?" put in Jim roughly. "Well, it's like this — the 'abit of boozin' ain't so easy

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to get rid of. And even if I did get rid of it for a bit, I dare say it would grab me again before I knew where I was."

A curious lump rose in Sallie's throat, and for a moment or two she could not speak. For she was absurdly tender-hearted.

Jim, glancing down sheepishly to find the cause of her sudden silence, was dismayed and almost appalled to see that her eyes were full of tears.

He dropped his pruning-knife, and gazed at her in speechless horror.

Presently she said, in a voice that was not quite steady:

"I am so sorry; I am so very, very sorry!"

Jim descended the steps in awkward haste, and as he stooped to pick up his knife, mumbled under his breath:

"Lord love ye, miss! don't take on abaht a waster like me. If I thought it 'ud please you — for you've treated me like a real little lady — I'd — blime me if I wouldn't turn a bl — a bloomin' teetotaller, and charnce it."

"Oh, would you — would you really?" exclaimed Sallie eagerly.

"You say the word, and I'll do it," was the half-sullen answer.

Sallie held out her hand with a smile that was very winning — none the less so that tears still hung on her heavy lashes.

"It's splendid of you," she said in a low voice; "for I'm afraid it will be awfully hard. And you'll go and see Mr. Torrens?" she added. "I've written down his town address."



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He nodded without speaking, and went on with his work. And while he worked he registered a hazy, incoherent form of vow, which, I may as well say here, he kept for the rest of his life.

He followed Sallie with his eyes as she slowly left the conservatory. Then he slashed vigorously at a recalcitrant branch, as though it were a mortal enemy

Chapter XXIII

LATE on the following evening Eliza Bassett was sitting at her open window, manipulating an old coat of her husband's, with the view of "making it down," for Bob.

Bob himself was asleep in the cupboard-like inner room, where the baby slumbered also. Irene had gone out to do some household errands for her mother.

Eliza felt more than usually depressed and disheartened to-night. The star-studded sky, the velvety breeze, the scent from the big pot of musk on her neighbour's window-sill, suddenly brought back to her memory the village where she had been a girl. She was not really so much past girlhood now. But care and poverty, and many other things, had stolen away her youth, and made her look almost middle-aged.

Suddenly the door opened, and Bassett came in. His wife looked up with a quick, half-fearful glance that told its own tale; then she drew a sharp breath of relief.

"Well, Jim," she said, "so you're back?"

Her voice was gentler and less shrill than it often was. And Jim's voice, as he answered her, was more like the voice of the Jim Bassett who had courted her in the far-away village long ago.

"Yes, I've got back," he answered briefly enough.

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"You look as if you'd heard some good news," she went on after a pause.

"Mebbe I 'ave," he said; then he added: "How'd ye like to live in the country again, 'Liza?"

"In the country!" she echoed, a faint flush coming into her thin face. "Oh, Jim, d'ye mean it? Like to live in the country again! Not 'alf!"

"Well, we're goin'," her husband said shortly. "I've got a job as head-gardener at a place called Lillinghurst. We're goin' next week."

Eliza looked bewildered.

"Head-gardener!" she repeated. "You've got a job! Next week! S'elp me, I feel as if I was struck silly."

"You look it," he answered not unkindly. "Well, it's a Gawd's truth. There's a nice little furnished 'ouse and garden, and a fust-rate school in the nearest village, as 'll let Irene 'ave the eddication I want's 'er to 'ave. And the fresh air 'll be prime for you and the other kids," he added as an after thought.

Eliza's eyes were shining, and the unwonted colour still flushed her cheeks.

"I can't hardly believe it," she said in a low voice. "It seems as if I must be dreamin'."

"Well, I ain't dreamin'," replied Jim. "And I don't mind 'avin' a bit o' supper."

Eliza jumped up.

"It's just ready. I was goin' to 'ave it early, so as I could take home the washing-baskets."

"You won't 'ave to do no more washing," said Jim, "excep' just what's wanted for ourselves. I'm goin' to stick into this job, my lass. It's my chance. I've never 'ad a chance afore. Now it's come, and I'm

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goin' to take hold. And we'll just kind of begin over again."

And, to her intense surprise, he laid his hands on her shoulders and kissed her.

"Lor', Jim!" she exclaimed, in a voice between tears and laughter.

"Now, you buck up," he said encouragingly, "and you'll see what you'll see. I ain't been as good a husband to you as I might, mebbe; but things has been agin me — for many a year, they 'as. Now you'll see different. And Mr. Torrens — that's my new boss — he's goin' to give me an advance to pay the expenses of travellin' down, and cetera. And you'll get a bit to buy what clothes is wanted for you and the kids."

"Oh, Jim," faltered Eliza, "if you ain't a'most what you used to seem like when we was fust married. I've been a bad-tempered, nagging kind of vixen, I know; but things has been agin me too."

"That's so," agreed her husband; "but we'll both leave bygones behind us, and say no more of 'em."

"And I suppose you'll have a fairly good wage?" ventured Eliza half timidly.

For she was not yet sure how soon this resuscitated Jim of her youth might not resume the shape of the domestic tyrant and bully she had feared and almost hated for so long.

"I'll 'ave a wage that 'll make your eyes open," he answered in an important voice; "besides free 'ouse and garden and firin', and moderate use of vegetables. Mr. Torrens is a gentleman, and an American, and understands as 'ow the better a man's paid the better he'll work."

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"And," went on Eliza more timidly still, "what about socialism, and the processions and speeches and that?"

"Oh, blarst socialism!" growled Jim. "When I come to think abaht it, socialism 'ain't been much good to me — fust and larst. So I'm goin' to chuck it. A man with 'andsomely paid work to do — work as he can put his 'eart into — 'ain't got no use for socialism. 'Alf the socialists — workin' men socialists, I mean — ain't socialists at all; only men raging for some kind of justice because they're starvin' — like wild beasts 'll rage when they're starvin'. If a man's stomach's filled reg'lar, and the stomachs of them as belong to 'im, and if 'is work's paid for at a self-respectin' price, 'e won't 'ave no time nor need for socialism."

"Well, I never!" ejaculated Eliza. "Why, they won't believe their ears at the Dolphin."

"Mebbe not. The Dolphin, nor any other pub. won't see much of me arter this," was the oracular answer.

"Lor', Jim, 'ave you got religion, or what?" said his wife, looking at him curiously.

"No, I ain't; but something's made me look on things a bit different — never you mind what. I've got the sense to change my mind when I see I've been on a wrong tack. You take that from me. Only a pig-headed fool goes on thinkin' wrong arter he sees it is wrong; and Jim Bassett's no fool, whatever else he may be."

Eliza marvelled, and was silent.

"Where's Irene?" demanded Jim, as he drew his chair in to the table.

"She went out to do some errands, and she said

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might she stay and have supper with the Warings, if they asked her?"

"And the kids?"

"Asleep. I gave them their supper early."

When the meal was over, Bassett took his chair over to the window, and lit his pipe.

Eliza, marvelling more than ever — for the Dolphin usually claimed his evenings — hastily cleared the table, and seated herself opposite to him with her sewing.

"It's most like old times, ain't it, Jim?" she said.

He nodded.

"It'll be liker them when we get down yonder," he said presently.

"It's a lovely night," went on Eliza. "I never saw as many stars — not since the night you and me was promised to one another. And the musk next door smells that strong. I dessay it means rain afore mornin'. I'd best step round with these washing-baskets now."

"Let them be. I'll carry them round after a bit. How long is it that we've been married, 'Liza?"

"Nigh on twelve years," she answered.

"Eh, but the time goes on," said Jim. "You were a fine slip of a gal in those days. We'll get that pinched-up look off your face when the country sun 'as shone on it for a bit, though."

Eliza's work had fallen on her lap, and there was a happy, far-away look in her eyes.

"Twelve years ago," she repeated softly. "It seems as if it might be yesterday."



Chapter XXIV

THERE is a tiny old-world village on the Suffolk coast called Rock Bay, where the North Sea woos the shore very tenderly in summer and very roughly in winter. And here Sara accompanied Sallie and the two children about the end of July, Miss Cave having gone home for her holidays.

Mrs. Hamersley had gone to Switzerland, after first cajoling and then threatening the imperturbable Sara for the unpardonable sin of withdrawing herself and her allowance from Bryanston Square for ever. Not more strongly had Selina resented her coming than she now resented her going.

But Sara had irrevocably made up her mind. She had seen Mr. Lirrip, and listened calmly to his protestations against her proposed disposal of the bulk of her fortune — namely, in founding and supporting a home for a limited number of deserving married couples over sixty, without adequate means of support.

“I mean to buy a comfortable country ’ouse,” Sara had said to the scandalized Mr. Lirrip. “No newly-built ‘desirable mansions’ for me, but a cosy ’omelike ’ouse as ’as been lived in. And each couple shall ’ave their private rooms and meals there, if wished. And it’ll be a place with big, ’andsome grounds, and plenty of trees and fruit and vegetables, and a decent library for them as is of a lit’ry turn.

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And there they'll end their days, and tell the five-bob pension to go to blazes."

"And who will guarantee that they are deserving?" inquired Mr. Lirrip, somewhat sarcastically.

"I will," was the stolid answer. "I've ways of gettin' to know abaht things that some others 'asn't. And I'll see abaht the matron and servants and all. And my old couples 'll all be workin' people. For I understand there's plenty of 'omes for what they call 'indignant gentlewomen,' and 'indignant gentlemen.' And well they may be indignant, if left to charity in their old age. But I'm goin' to 'elp the class I was brought up in, and chance it. So there's my future scheme, sir; and it 'as the approval of my future 'usband, who's anxious to marry me, so long as I don't 'ave a bigger income than 'im."

"Most extraordinary," muttered Mr. Lirrip — "most extraordinary. And a Scotsman, too. Almost unbelievable."

And then, with a helpless shrug, he washed his hands of the whole matter.

And now, on a baking afternoon in early August, Sara was sitting on the sandy beach not far from the little cottage that she and Sallie had taken for six weeks. She wore a large brown mushroom hat, a purple cotton coat and skirt, and delightfully comfortable elastic-sided boots. Sallie sat beside her, in a cool-looking brown holland gown, and a hat of the same. Little Anne and Alec, some distance off, had erected a stately sand castle, on which the incoming tide was making slow but steady ravages.

"I think it is simply a splendid idea," Sallie was saying. "But I wonder what other woman would



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have given up nearly ten thousand a year to make poor old couples happy for life — however deserving."

"Well, in a way of speakin', I was kind of drove to it," admitted Sara. "For I'll be a far 'appier woman in my little cottage, with a kind, sensible 'usband to look arter me, and be company to me, than wallowin' in luxury that makes me tired and dead-beat every day and night of my life. There ain't nothink to show for it, neither. It's drive, drive, and scramble, scramble, and tear, tear, till my head's fair dizzy. And to speak truth, Sallie, I ain't 'appy in constant silks and satings — no more than John Fergus would be 'appy in an evening suite — or suit, is it? Oh, well, evening suit or evening dress, it makes no matter. Arter all, too much money, in a way of speakin', is nigh as bad as too little, as far as care and worry goes."

Sallie smiled absently. She was sitting leaning her chin in the palm of her hand, looking far out to sea. There was a touch of melancholy about her mouth to-day, and even about the droop of her figure.

Little Anne and Alec had further moved up the beach now, and were enclosing Winkle in a circular wall of sand, where he sat eagerly awaiting the rush of water which would be the signal for him to scramble out, barking hilariously.

Presently Sara said:

"You haven't 'eard from Mr. Rollestone for quite a bit, have you?"

"No," Sallie answered. "I can't understand it. It seems so strange. It makes me feel quite anxious."

"Now, I do 'ope and trust," mused Sara in her

and 'ave to be sent for, w
I knew a woman myself, as I
and never had a letter for c
choosin' 'er widow's weeds v
as you please; and got dru
the same as if he'd never be
as uncertain as men. And
very day; for well I can see
there soldier as is a-settin' w

And she glanced contemp
near distance, where the angu
could be descried in bold relie
of her companion's uniform.

"The very idea," continu
"of a woman of her age taki
'ere to-day and gone to-mor
whereabouts unknown. Far
green-grocer's shop, as I kn
But there, once glamour a
and she's like wax in the ha
no manner of doubt that the



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"Surely it can't be Terence!" exclaimed Sallie, shading her eyes from the fierce August sun. "He and his father are staying with some people in Norfolk. And yet — yes, it is."

It was Terence. And little Anne and Alec flung down their spades and rushed to meet him. But Winkle, though he whined and thumped his tail excitedly up and down, did not attempt to leave his post, knowing that he would be punished if he moved before the tide reached him.

Alec was rather mortified at being found by one of his own sex "playing like a kid," as he expressed it. But he explained to Terence that it was to please Anne.

"It wasn't," said Anne flatly. "You suggested it. And you know we do it every day. I do it to please Winkle."

"Little frauds," answered Terence good-humouredly. "You do it to please yourselves. And why not? I'm going to have a shy myself in a minute. Sara and Sallie, ahoy!" he shouted at the top of his strong young voice.

"You meteoric person," said Sallie. "I thought you were at Elmdene."

"So I am," he answered, giving one hand to her and one to Sara, and dropping exhaustedly on the sand. "At least, so I'm supposed to be. But an evil spirit prompted me to bike over to see you. And the way seemed short, O Sallie of my heart."

"Why an evil spirit?" asked Sallie, making room for Anne on the rug beside her.

"Because I am a deserter," answered Terence, pulling his straw hat far down over his eyes. "It is

On no! To do the dear thinking of himself. He d her his daughter-in-law. I desire it, it may possibly n rich, very plain, and her nar

"Where did you leave y

"At the cottage. An gooseberries permitted me shed."

"That is our hired help," is Mrs. Muddle. She is rat philosopher, in her way. T asked her what kind of peop Bay, and she said: 'Wel There's some as is gentlef they is, and some as knows t Terence laughed.

"Good for the old part, rather a jolly little place. A is no railway. It ruins all these places where the only starts at the peep of dav.



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"An antedeluvian box that calls itself an omnibus," said Sallie, "drawn by a kind of tame cow that calls itself a horse."

"And the driver's a ripping old sort," chimed in Alec. "He lets me drive to the station every day. He says I'm a first-rate whip."

"But the horse walks all the way," giggled Anne. "It drives itself. You only hold the reins."

"It isn't only holding the reins," was the lofty answer. "It's the way one holds them."

"Correct you are, Alec. There are only two ways of doing a thing — the right way and the wrong way," murmured Terence lazily.

"No, there's only one way," returned Alec, "and that's the right way. The wrong way is just — not the way."

"Have you been taking lessons in splitting hairs, my heavenly infant?" said Terence, laughing. "The sea-air has sharpened your wits."

"Bless the child, he always was as sharp as a needle since I knew him," observed Sara, with her comfortable smile. "And if 'e was mine, I'd make him a lawyer."

"No," said Alec decidedly; "I'm going to be a stockbroker. They get rich quicker than most people. Look at Mr. Garstoke. I've heard him say he once hadn't sixpence, and made a fortune in two years."

"I don't know much about stockbrokers," said Sara, shaking her head. "But I 'ave heard that stockbroking's as quick a way of losin' money as of makin' it."

"This discussion is getting far beyond my depths," objected Terence, who was lying close to Sallie's feet,

“What on earth makes we
papers, I don't know! Listen
called 'Toilet Hints': 'En
boiling water every night f
retiring. Then anoint with
be left on all night.' Jove!
want soothing cream left on
And, snakes! listen to this:
burnt skin removed from your
called "scaling." This will
your remaining in strict seclus
six weeks, at the end of which
will appear, and you will har
course, it is painful; but the
The price for the treatment
ten guineas, payable beforehar
the survivors would be jolly
wards. Of all the silly rot I

As he spoke he threw away
to his feet. For a curious sou
the sands, finally resolving its



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"Why, nothing, you absurd boy," she answered brightly. "It is only that I am simply dying for tea."

"By the way," he said, "I have a friend who is awfully anxious to see Rock Bay. I went up to town for an hour or two yesterday, and lunched with him. He's rather a nice chap, so I gave him your address. I dare say you won't mind showing him a little attention."

"Oh no," she answered absently. "Any friend of yours will be welcome. When is he coming?"

"To-morrow or next day, I fancy," he said, throwing a stone for Winkle to catch.

And it was not until he had gone, an hour or two later, that Sallie remembered she had forgotten to ask his friend's name.

* * * * *

The inhabitants of Rock Bay, as a rule, retired to rest abnormally early, and it was barely half-past nine, when Sallie, leaning out of her open window, saw that every light was extinguished in the queer little bunch of houses that formed the village. She had not lit her own candle, nor even begun to undress. There was no moon, but the stars were singularly large and bright, and the air was sweet with the mingled fragrance of sweet-briar and the sea. The tide was going out, and the sands and seaweed glistened in the faint starlight. The tiny room felt hot and stuffy, and a freakish impulse seized Sallie to go down to the water's edge, and wade luxuriously in the retreating waves.

In another minute, with her shoes on stockingless little feet, she had crossed the garden and the road, and run down to the beach.

When she had left the cottage
a mile behind her, she sat down
and her feet dip into a little pool
as she looked up at the solen
flew to her absent lover. A v
had possessed her all day. It
he had not written. Suppose
happened to him? But she put
out of her mind.

Nevertheless, an uncomfortable
her memory of a girl whose l
and had appeared to her at the
on the staircase of her London h
dress for dinner. What if Eva

Suddenly she became aware
coming towards her across the
figure there was something stran

She rose to her feet with a qu
man came on swiftly, the sea
his firm, regular footsteps.

Sallie stood breathless, her l



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Evan Rollestone or his ghost. He did not look like a ghost, certainly; and if he was a ghost, he smoked very good and realistic tobacco, judging from the cigar he had just thrown away.

"Pardon me, are you Miss Hamersley?" he said, coming to a standstill before her.

Poor Sallie put up one hand to her head in dazed bewilderment, for the voice — unless she was mad or dreaming — was the voice of Evan Rollestone.

"Yes — I am Miss Hamersley," she stammered, feeling like one in some paralyzing nightmare.

"I'm afraid I have startled you," he went on in a tone of self-reproach; "but I felt sure it must be you. The description is so exact. As a matter of fact, I am a friend of your cousin, Terence Agnew. I met him in town yesterday —"

"Oh, yes, I remember," faltered Sallie, pinching her arm vigorously to make sure she was really awake — "I remember — he said something about a friend," Then she added desperately:

"It is the most extraordinary thing, but really, do you know, you are so very, very like a friend of mine who is in West Africa."

"Is your friend, by any chance, called Evan Rollestone?" he said, with a curious change of expression.

"Yes, yes. Do you know him?" — laying one hand on his sleeve.

"Unfortunately I do," he answered. "There is, as you say, a remarkable likeness between us."

"Why do you speak in that tone?" she flashed out.

"I am sorry if my tone displeases you," he said,

"My dear young lady, I
than you do," he answered i
can assure you he is a man I
see married to a sister of mi
can assure you, deliberately
are engaged to him, are you
know all about it, you see. H
letters. And that last photo
well, you may know how mu
tell you that I have it at this
book."

"I don't believe a word of it,
"If you have my photograph
it. And if you have read r
without his knowledge. Let
stantly."

And she stamped one bare f

The stranger looked at her v

"I am sorry you do not beli
what sadly. "You are very l
little thing. What will you s
tell you that he is going to

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"It is a lie," she said quietly. "It is a wicked lie."

Her companion shrugged his shoulders slightly.

"You will find it is true," he said in a very gentle voice. "That is why he has come home."

"Home! — he has not come home. I heard from him only —"

Then she stopped, remembering the time that had elapsed since Evan's last letter.

"He arrived in London yesterday," went on the kind, sad voice, "and he is at this moment with the girl he is going to marry. She is staying at an absurd little village called Rock Bay, where the inhabitants apparently go to bed with the sun, and where the visitors stroll about the beach shoeless and stockingless after dark, and are exceedingly rude to people who have come thousands of miles to see them."

Sallie broke into a cry of happy, sobbing laughter.

"Evan — Evan — it is you!" she exclaimed, as she was suddenly squeezed against a blue-serge-clad shoulder. "Oh, I knew it must be."

"You didn't," he whispered joyously, as he kissed her. "You didn't. You thought at first I was a ghost. And then you thought —"

"Oh, never mind what I thought," she answered, giving his arm a little shake. "But, really, Evan, it was too bad of you. What possessed you to be such a goose?"

"I don't know. But I've often wondered what the effect would be if one calmly denied one's identity on the plea of a strong supposed likeness. And when you stared at me with that scared look in your eyes, the idea suddenly came into my head. Now, you're go-

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ing to put on your shoes. Sit down, and I'll dry your feet with my handkerchief."

"Ah, now I know it's you," she said, laughing, as she seated herself, "because that is one of the handkerchiefs I embroidered for you with my own hands."

Then she added:

"I shall never forgive myself that I didn't find you out at once, and play up. You would have been properly scared if I had calmly told you that I was married."

"No, I shouldn't. I should have said it was a pity you had lost your wedding-ring."

They walked slowly back to the cottage, and as they paused at the little porch Evan said:

"You are sure, then, that you are not afraid to be the wife of a very poor man, and to go with him to West Africa?"

"Not in the least," she answered steadily.

"God bless you, you dear, staunch little soul!" he said in a low, tender voice, as he bent to kiss her.

"Goodness gracious!" exclaimed Sara's voice from a window above them, "whoever are you talking to, Sallie, in the dead of night? I thought nothing but what it was burglars."

"You are quite right," said Evan, laughing, as he looked up at her. "I am a burglar. I am going to steal Sallie in a fortnight."

"Bless us and save us, if it isn't Mr. Rolleston!" cried Sara joyfully. "And the pore lamb frettin' cruel at not 'avin' 'er letter. Well, there, I am glad. And where are you staying?"

"At a ramshackle little inn at the end of the village," he said. "I only arrived by the late train, and went



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out for a smoke before turning in; and I found Sallie on the beach."

"Lor', child, I thought you had gone to bed," said Sara. "I declare you and Terence are a pair for unexpectedness."

"She is very unexpected," said Evan, laughing. "She actually didn't know me to-night. Do you think I'm so very much changed, Mrs. Grub?"

"Changed? Not a atom. I'd 'ave knowed you anywheres. Now, for goodness' sake, come in, Sallie. Mr. Rollestone ain't goin' back to West Africa to-night, I dessay."

Part of the next morning was spent by Sallie and Evan in cruising about the bay in a small boat. Sallie was singing. Her song was one that Evan was fond of, because she had sung it somewhere on the night he had first asked her to marry him. And the words were these:

"Once in a while the sun shines out,
And the arching skies are a perfect blue;
Once in a while, 'mid clouds of doubt,
Faith's fairest stars come peeping through.
Our paths lead into the meadows fair,
Where the sweetest blossoms nod and smile;
And we lay aside our cross of care —
Once in a while.

"Once in a while within our own,
We feel the hand of a steady friend;
Once in a while we feel the tone
Of love with the heart's own voice to blend.
And the dearest of all our dreams comes true,
Each thirsting flower is kissed with dew —
Once in a while.

"Once in a while in the desert sand,
We find a spot of the fairest green;

A gun sang that on the
said Evan, shipping his oar

"But her voice wasn't a pe-

"Was she pretty?" asked

"Not nearly so pretty as

"Really, Evan, what a
ment!"

"It isn't a compliment.
the same time, she was prett-

"That's better," said Sallie
smile. "I wonder if I am
only dreamed you have come
it so often."

"It doesn't matter, so long
one and the same time," m
Sallie! I think you are pretti
so last night."

"You silly boy, I'm not r-

"Then you must be clever
for you have succeeded in ma
think you are the prettiest g

"This is delightful." S



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"Ah, and that reminds me," she interrupted him, "when I was doing my hair this morning I couldn't help thinking of the fearful way you — you invented things last night."

"Invented things?" repeated Evan. "My good girl, what do you mean?"

"Oh, you know very well. You know, for one thing, that you said Evan Rollestone wasn't the sort of person a man would like his sister to marry."

"No, my dear. Always strive to be accurate. I said I shouldn't like him to marry my sister — if I had one. Neither I should. I should, as a matter of fact, be very sorry to see him married to anybody but you. And, thank Heaven! you are not my sister."

"And you said you had shown my letters and given away my photograph, and that you were going to marry another girl in a fortnight."

"Did I? Think again. I said I had seen all your letters, and that I carried your photograph in my pocket-book, and that I was going to be married in a fortnight. These statements were all absolutely true. But I fail to remember any remarks about another girl."

"But you are not going to be married in a fortnight," remonstrated Sallie. "There wouldn't be time to get things. It takes some time to get a foreign outfit, you know. And I couldn't get suddenly married until my stepmother comes home."

"Why? Are sudden marriages illegal without the presence of stepmothers?" he asked, beginning to row again very gently; for they were within a few yards of the shore.

ing."

"No? Well, hang it a news any longer. Suppose grandmother's had been fou everything? Because that is that is why I rushed home soon as I heard."

"Evan!" almost screamed it! Oh!"

In her excitement she had the boat promptly heeled o both in the water.

Fortunately they were no as Evan carried his future w

"Well, talk of throwing c siasm. It's a jolly good thi beach."

But Sallie, after swallowi ter, only gasped:

"Gracious! you must hav a year!"

"About that" he answer

willing to face poverty and comparative exile with me.

Chapter

"WELL, I will say I think
as she poured a little water

A year had passed, and
were having tea in the pretty
comfortable cottage near M.

"Yes, I'll no deny it see
mitted John, as he helped
to shrimps. "It seems a long
year just to mak' a handful
it's a good cause. And I was
and no so dear when ye come
And the bit bodies seemed
like. Ay, it's a bonnie, bonnie
mun, to my mind it's no to
homestead here. I wouldn't
himself."

"It you was a king, I'd tell
Jessie.

"Weel, if ye was, I doubt
than ye see it."



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her father's brown one, "ither lasses havna got a feyther like mine neither."

"That's a good little soul," said Sara approvingly, as she beamed at the tiny speaker. "Contentment's the finest sauce in the world, my lamb, and makes many a stew of troubles digestible that would turn our stomachs without it."

"That's verra true, Sara. Ye've a deal o' common sense for a female," observed John; "and you mak' use o't in a quiet and unobtrusive way that's verra becomin' to your sex."

"Lor'," said Sara, "why shouldn't a woman have as much sense as a man? I've known them as had more. One sex has as much want of it as the other. Book-larning, now, is different. I never was nothin' at book-larning, excep' what I picked up from my sixpenny box in War Lane. Never shall I forget, John, how proud I was of you when I heard you repeat all the Kings of England since they began."

"Eh, when was that?" asked John, with the slow, indulgent smile of the flattered male.

"It was one night at the Skinners'," she answered, smoothing the smart lace frills at the wrists of her afternoon gown. "Dear, dear, it's years ago."

"I don't mind onything of it," said her husband. "But, hoots, a wummun has no call to ken things like that. Book-larning's a snare to weemen. My mither used to say the only books a wummun needed to study was her Prayer-Book and her cookery-book."

"And, once in a way, 'er bank-book I guess," amended Sara—"that's to say, if she 'as a bank with anythink in it."

"Ay, ay," acquiesced John.

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Then he added:

"I hope you're no disappointed, wummun, that yer ain bank-book's less solid readin' than it would have been if you'd remained Mrs. Grub?"

"Oh, get along," was the cheerful answer. "When I'm disappointed, I'll give you a 'int. And well you know I ain't. Don't he, Jessie?"

"I think you're gey and fond of feyther," Jessie answered; "and he aye fancied you, mither."

Sara smiled, and murmured:

"Good little Jessie."

It was a secret joy to her that the child had from the first unhesitatingly appropriated her as her mother. Sara's was a heart essentially motherly, and its long-quenched instincts were at last gratified.

John looked at her approvingly.

"I'm thinkin' the air down here suits ye fine, Sara. You're lookin' a heap bonnier than ye did in the toon."

Sara blushed a little.

"Don't be a silly jay," she said. "I'm an old woman, or near it, and what good looks I ever 'ad 'as gone. Not but what it's a pleasure to 'ear my own 'usband makin' complimentary remarks."

"Well, well," answered John, "as my mother used to say, 'It's good gear that pleases the merchant.' And I wouldna change ye, Sara, my wummun."

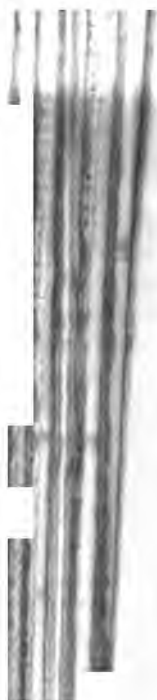
"And who's talkin' of changin', John Fergus?" said Sara, with a sharpness that held a certain tenderness. "Just 'ave another cup of tea, and let's go and 'ave a look at the roses. Lor', to think as 'ow I used to save up a penny or two to buy a bunch of roses now and then, and now I can 'ave my 'ands full if I like. John, John, it's a wonderful world. There's



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